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The VICTORIAN BING CROSBY Society

THE CROSBY VOICE

ISSUE No 32 MAY 1985

NEWSLETTER OF THE VICTORIAN BING CROSBY SOCIETY

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Hello again.

Here's another solid-packed issue of 'The Crosby Voice'. We seem to have managed to fill every page again; in fact, there were even a few items we have to hold over til the next issue.

Perhaps you're curious about the cover illustration. (Perhaps you're not!) This comes from the letterhead of our new official note paper for the club. Of course, we've blown it up to make a proper cover illustration. The new paper gives us quite a professional stylish look. Bing's photo is reproduced in blue and the rest in (what else) gold! (Well, orange actually, but if you half close your eyes it looks gold.)

We've settled happily into our new home, the State Film Theatre. The facilities there are wonderful. The can project any kind of film we provide and any kind of video too, with the best video projection system I've ever seen. The State Film Centre is far more luxurious than the Mobil Centre, not that there was anything wrong with our old home. It's just that the new one is even better. They even provide an offical usher's torch so yours truly can escort late-comers to their seats after the show has started! All I need now is an old Hoyts burgundy uniform and I'll be set.

In our last issue you may recall that we featured an article on rare Australian labels by 'well-known Australian collector, Bill Brill'. Well here's a newsflash. 'Bill Brill' is none other than well-known Australian collector, Gordon Wall! You guessed? Oh.

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THE VICTORIAN BING CROSBY SOCIETY, P.O. Box 422, South Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. 3205

Affiliated with the Queensland Bing Crosby Society, PO Box 92, Ferny Hills, Queensland, Australia. 4055

Executive Committee: President - Bob Machliss. Vice-President - Ken Orren. Treasurer - Keith Dorman. Secretary - Les Saynor.

General Committee: Bill Bennett, Josie Conway, Sylvia Harding, Jim McManus and George Styles.

USA Rep: Richard Pearson, PO Box 1481, Arlington, Virginia 22210.

UK Rep: Keith Parkinson, "Meadowcroft", Houghtons Lane, Eccleston, St Helens WA10 5LD, England.

Well, Gordon has provided another excellent article for us this issue, and you can find it on page 34.

* One page 5, we present the third in Vern Taylor's invaluable series "HAIL KMH!". This time, Vern discusses 'The Comics'.

* There are some wonderful new reoord issues reviewed, starting page 17, including Vol 3 in the Chronological Crosby series and a new LP with a couple of undiscovered radio songs from 1931!

* The Queensland Society is going gmeat guns. Their first report appears on page 25.

* On pages 29 - 33, we reproduce a magazine article from PEOPLE magazine, dated July 30th 1969) in which famous Australian radio personality Norman Banks describes an interview he made with Bing.

* Many of you were fortunate, as I was, to know the late Bill Weeden. We feature a small tribute to Bill on page 38.

* The Bing Crosby Historical Society is another group that continues to make waves in the world of Crosby. You can read what they've been up to lately on pages 39 and 40.

* On pages 43 - 48, we have some news on the Crosby golfing scene. Firstly, a two page article on Bob Hope, and secondly, a series of articles on the annual Bing Crosby Pro-Am Golf Tournament which sounds like it is about to undergo radical changes. The articles, so far as they go, tell the full story. The last we received is dated April 27th, so we don't know the final outcome of the drama. Thanks to members Richard Pearson and Frank Smith who supplied the clippings.

* Finally, on page 51, we present part two of Tiny Tim's interesting article, 'The Great Crooners'.

Our back page specials are always popular with members. But sometimes we have a problem finding something suitable. (Not this issue!) If you anything unusual, like an old cartoon of Bing, that you think might look good on our last page, please loan it to us. We'll copy it straight away and get your original back by return post.

Let's get down to business, as always, with our future functions.

3) FILM EVENING, MONDAY JUNE 17TH

✪ FUTURE FUNCTIONS ✪

Our mid-year movie this time round is the first film that you all selected to watch, and it's one of the great ones:

"WE'RE NOT DRESSING"

from 1934. The movie also stars Carole Lombard, Leon Errol, Ethel Merman, Burns and Allen and a very young Ray Milland. The evening gets underway at 7.30 so try to get there around 7.00.

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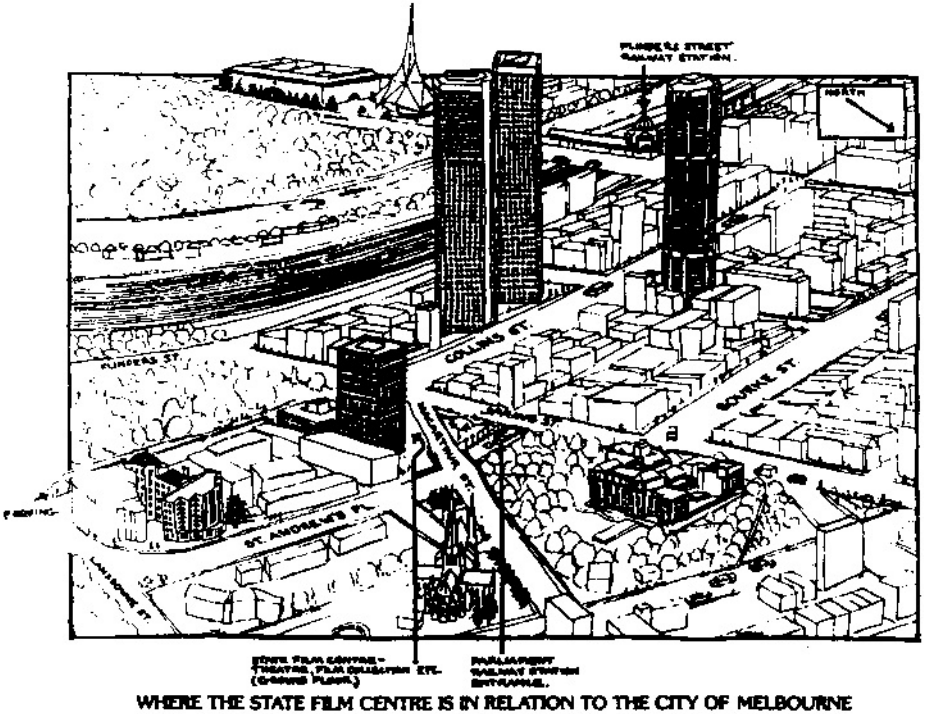
JOINT MEETING WITH THE INTERNATIONAL AL JOLSON SOCIETY, MONDAY AUGUST 19TH

For the third year in a row, we have a joint meeting with the Jolson group. The films to be screened are:

"SWANNEE RIVER" with Jolson, and
"PENNIES FROM HEAVEN" with Bing.

Same details as above apply, regarding starting times. And of course, both nights are at the State Film Centre.



WHERE THE STATE FILM CENTRE IS IN RELATION TO THE CITY OF MELBOURNE

1985 got away to a great start with three highly successful functions. First for the year was our first film evening at the State Film Centre, attended by some 70 members and guests. Main feature of the evening was "THE BELLS OF ST MARYS" while the supporting attraction was Episode 1 in the fascinating Thames TV series "HOLLYWOOD" - a history of the silent movies.

Door prizes were won by Bill Grenfell, Gyn Newson, Keith Carr and Stan Alexander.

Second Function for the year was our most successful BBQ yet. For a change of pace, we served up rotisseried roast beef as a main course, and our caterers, The Spit Roast Catering Company, out did themselves! At $8 a head, everyone agreed it was superb value.
Special thanks must be given to Wally and Maureen Carson, who also outdid themselves! Not only were they kind enough to donate their home and garden for the occasion, but thanks to Wally's efforts, we actually had a LIVE jazz band for entertainment - Bill Kerr's Jazz Band. And it didn't cost the club a cent. Wally raised the money himself via a series of raffles at his local pub. Now that's what I call service above and beyond the call of duty. Thanks from all of us Wally. Of course, while we're handing out thanks, we mustn't forget Jim McManus, whose mighty efforts also contributed to the afternoon's success. 75 happy members and friends can't be wrong! Whoops, nearly forgot Keith and Roz Dorman who also deserve our thanks. Keith was the money man on the door and no-one sneaked past his eagle eye, whilst Roz was a great help with the serving tongs.

Third Function for the year was another film evening at the State Film Centre. This go round we screened "DOUBLE OR NOTHING", one of Bing's first 'dramatic' films, well, 'dramatic' compared to his other movies of the period. Supporting the feature was another episode in the "HOLLYWOOD" series - episode 15 which dealt with the coming of sound and featured some fascinating snippets of early experimental sound films.
Lucky winners of the door prizes were: Pam Henson, Paul Mason, Gordon Philips, Wayne Elliot and Jeff Koops (TWICE). Top prize of the evening was a copy of "Bing - A Voice For All Seasons".

WHERE TO PARK AT THE STATE FILM CENTRE

BEST PLACE to park is TREASURY PLACE - that's the road behind the Treasury Building which is normally closed off during the day to all but offical parking. Enter from Lansdown Street and drive right past the guard house. See extreme left of the map at left.

HAIL KMH!

BING CROSBY AND THE KRAFT MUSIC HALL

PART 3: THE COMICS

by

Vernon Wesley Taylor

"Where'd you go last night?"

"Nowhere; stayed home and caught Bing on his Kraft show."

The great thing to remember about Kraft's Music Hall of the late 30's and early 40's is that it was formostly a place on radio where Bing's many fans could listen to their idol. It was him they wanted to hear. On records and in motion-pictures and in radio, he had, by his superb singing abilities, coaxed them to do so. By now he was a not-so-small industry upon which depended the livlihoods of scores of other people. When the Kraft Cheese company had signed him up, this is what they were counting on. Like it or not , Bing Crosby was the Kraft Musis Hall. Everything else was window-dressing. No matter how much effort or whatever wonderful effect anyone else might achieve, this was always the case. This was and yet is, to a great extent, the way it was in the days of the Hollywood Star System.

That such an artifical set up ordinarily produces friction goes without saying. The STAR, by his very position, is bound to upstage everybody abound him. The audience insists on it and when they do not get it, they talk back in the only way open to them; they 'turn the dial' ! However, a certain blurring of the facts is likewise an imperative. The STAR must appear to be at least a little unassuming while the subordinate performers and non-performers must appear to be happy and grateful just to be the smaller bananas in the bunch.

Far too many instances in 'showbiz' history demonstrate this is not always the easiest posture to maintain. Second, third and fourth bananas drop off, unable to 'stand the gaff', STARS let their egos glow through their facade. When 'the charming fiction' becomes painfully unconvincing, the whole package generally gets tossed into the dustbin if matters are not soon corrected. Another important American singer and one of the greatest of the Swing Music stars, also had these 'temprem ental' troubles throughout his long career.

It has been heartening to learn in these researches that Bing was truly a modest person and that few or none of the usual irritations interfered with Bing's show. Whatever problems there may have been were always worked out without damage to the series. He, of course, was the STAR but he was also largely responsible for what occurred. He was forced to accept the blame as well as the praise. He could not escape that. He did not shirk his responsibility nor his leadership with Kraft.

(7) He ran his show but he did it with much advice from others and with an appreciation of what they could do. He knew that the program was more important than any single individual connected with it. He knew himself still to be learning his profession; ever the aptitudinal person. So, the reality seems to be that the KMH family found the work an exciting opportunity to further their own careers. As for the cheese company which owned and controlled the enterprise, their dollar-investment lifted them to the top level of the dairy products industry.

That said, it redoubles our pleasure to be able to speak of the comic on Kraft Music Hall, the so-called 'Second Banana'. This post was first given to one Robin 'Bob' Burns. He had been a small-timer on the vaudeville circuit for years, playing the 'littlest of the little' houses and the weakest spots on the larger bills until he finally managed to beat his way out of the bushes and steal north. "The green (money) wasn't longer," he told an old friend, "and you couldn't smell the horses anymore but it got to be kind of fun listening to the funny accents."

Someone caught his act somewhere and discovered he might make an interesting difference as one of the lesser guest-performers on a then popular radgo program, 'The Rudy Vallee Hour'. Signing up change-of-pace guests was older than vaudeville and a hot pursuit in radio's heyday. The Major Bowes Amateur Hour was begun more for this particular appetite of the public than for giving eager beginners their 'big break'.

He appeared twice for Vallee but the first time brought him his success, for in the studio audience that evening was a young woman who found him wonderfully funny. By itself, this could hardly have mattered very much but she just happened to be the wife of the noted comedy-writer, Carroll Carroll and he just happened to be the writer-producer for the new Kraft Music Hall. Robin's weary climb up the weary rung was over. To the end of his days, he never ceased being grateful to Norma Carroll. "She's my mascot," he said more than once. "That little girl's big eyes and kinda wide open smile pulled me through the hardest time I'd had ever since I was nine years old and they tried to give me my first bath."

He came on KMH bearing his vaude moniker, 'The Arkansas Traveller' and carrying his Bazooka, a raucous, homemake variation of the trombone, which really did look like a liquor-still funnel and, some wags unkindly reported, was actually his alter-ego. He was provided with his own theme, just like Bing, a befittingly sedate down-tempo arrangement of 'Turkey in the Straw' and usually obliged Mr Trotter by joining the other musicians for a few helpful bars before tossing the offending Bazooka onto the floor in disgust.

(Carroll Carroll, Bing, Bob Burns and NBC'S Don Gilman.)

His relatives and friends back home in Van Buren became unseen (and unheard) residents on the show, notably kindly Aunt Boo and careful Grandpa Snazzy. They all became kissin' cousins of the listeners. Once, at least, Bing told everybody that he had heard that when they opened up King Tut's tomb, they found Granda Snazzy in there a-fryin' eggs. Van Buren was so grateful for the notoriety they sent their mayor out to Hollywood to be a guest on the show.

Burns raised stupidity and cluck-wisdom to popular art without being precisely stupid or wise, and before he left the hall, his jokes and his way of delivering them became new household gadgets, while his Bazooka, unforgettable, lived on, transmogrified into the terrible killing-weapon of World War II. He was, perhaps, the last of the great country-bumpkin story-tellers and southern-speech dialectitions. His antecedents of the form stretch back through Will Rogers, the minstrel endmen to Petroleum V. Nashby and on to Abe Lincoln --- and Honest Abe never claimed to be original.

(9) Some of radio's brightest moments in give-and-take situation humour was delivered by Bob and Bing and, sometimes anyone handy... placed delicately on their lips by Carroll Carroll ("Every line, every whisper"). Burns' phrase prefacing many of his tag-lines, "I -- I wanta tell you," was unashamedly swiped by Bob Hope, whether he admits it or not, thus paying the Arkansas Traveller his greatest compliment.

In a year or so he had gone from a pair of $75.00 spots to a top echelon feature on a very promising new series. This middle-aged, shambling, hulking farmer parleyed a modest talent for music and country jokes into "owning almost half of the far end of San Fernando Valley". Carroll wasn't kidding, "In those days you could buy an awful lot of acreage out there for two or three thousand dollars". He went on to say that Burns really didn't know what to do with the money they earned, so he did what a good farmer always does, buy land. "He wound up with about half of the downtown section of Reseda." Quite a ways out back then, one had to go around Bull Can Wash and aim his radiator ornament towards Encino.

Bob Burns career went up into the heady atmosphere. In fairly quick succession he made two films with Bing, as we know, besides others. He wrote magazine articles about the bucolic life and became a nationally syndicated columnist, his pithy 'sayings' appearing on the front pages of hundreds of newspapers every day. To many who still missed Will Rogers, it was as if he came back home from Point Barrow, Alaska, not having died in that plane crash, after all. When Kraft, who, to put it mildly, did not pay the top dollar in those days, refused to pay Bob more than their highest figure for his position on the show, $5000 (some say $2000), their comic departed and went onto a starring job of his own, for Lifebuoy Soap. There, he told his jokes and stories, blew his Bazooka and played a pretty good jazz-flavoured piano with a group he hired, the Suitcase Six. His new show followed Bing's each Thursday evening on the NBC Network, and, sometimes, he or Bing would 'go through the door' supposedly connecting their broadcasts, to guest on one another's shows.

An interesting footnote to the story of Bob Burns: During his later life, when the working days were over, he became the subject of a popular television series, the 'Beverley Hillbillies'. Buddy Ebsen was given the lead, probably because he possesses some resemblance to Burns. The story revolves around a transplanted hillbilly and his family, grown suddenly wealthy and dwelling amid posh surroundings in Beverley Hills. Naturally every liberty was not taken, but the Clampetts mixed Oheir old ways with their new ones, thus creating the plot, somewhat as Burns had done with his own life.

Mr.Carroll appeared as a material witness in a court action brought against the producer of the series, Paul Hemming, by someone who had accused Hemming of having stolen his story-idea. Carroll testified that he surmised that everybody knew that the 'idea' was really Bob Burns, retired and living in sumptuous if peculiar splendor out in the Valley. The suit was dropped and the show was a great hit, still enjoying re-runs after nearly twenty years. Carroll and Burns were very good friends. What his thoughts on the subject may be on this are still his own..

Rudy Vallee, unusually enough, was also involved with Kraft's next comic, Victor Borge. In 1941, shortly after his arrival as a refugee from his Nazi-dominated homeland of Denmark, he auditioned for the job of 'warm-up artist' for the Vallee program, and won it. This time, the Kid from Princeton invited Carroll and produced Cal Kuhl to come and have a look at his new man. Though Borge could, as yet , speak almost no English, they watched him doing a comedy-piano routine to a newly-arrived audience who had come to attend the Vallee hour. (It is possible that Vallee must have seemed anticlimactical to them afterwards.) He was so funny, so new and fresh and funny, that the KMH men begged to be allowed to use him.

In his autobiography, "Let the Chips Fall", Rudy takes Victor to task for not having been sufficiently grateful to him for having given him his big chance. Presumably, this took place when Vallee permitted Kraft to sign Victor to a contract. But it was not a total loss because Rudy was also Borge's American agent, thus receiving the agent's usual (if not more) fee! Carroll asked Rudy why he had not used Victor on his own show instead of as a warm-up artist and was told "We don't use comedians on my show". Not attempting to work out Mr Vallee's definition of Bob Burns who had earlier appeared with Vallee, they departed to make their plans with Victor.

(Left: a very young Victor Borge)

11) At first, he was given the same task that he had with the Vallee Hour, then was brought onto the Kraft show. Eventually, he elaborated one of his routines, which he called 'Phonetic Punctuation', a piece inspired , no doubt, by his on-going struggle with learning English. In this bit of wild nonsense, the narrator (Borge) demonstrates that great logic of transcribing punctuation-marks into vocal sounds, in order to make clear to the listener what the reader enjoys when studying the classics. The noises used in describing these marks are so appalingly appropriate, they astonish the first-time listener. It seems impossible that anyone could deliver them so quickly and accurately. Borge's delivery was urbane, sophisticated and provoking. In addition, his piano-playing, besides being on the level of classic-concert variety, nobly adapted itself with great success to his comic eccentricities.

On his first appearance within the broadcast itself, Bing said, "He was surprisingly good and got us all laughing. His spot stretched and stretched." Carroll said, "He went on right after the station break and stayed on. We lost one guest spot, two commercials, two songs by Bing, the closing announcement, the theme. We went off the air on his last line." Carroll went on to remember, "Everybody was worried over the sponsor's reaction. We heard from him immediately and he fairly screamed over the phone, 'That guy's great! Sign him up right away!" Bing said, "We kept him on ten or fifteen weeks. That's where he developed a lot of his monologues. I imagine that KMH was responsible for his breaking into the big-time in the USA. Quite an unusual fella."

Kraft Music Hall had a new smash act. Bob Burns left about this same time and the ambience subtly changed. Some critics in the trade papers hinted that the show, after five years, had finally grown up. Of course, this was unkind and untrue. KMH, like all good series programs, had not actually changed at all. From first to last, it remained true to the premise to present Bing Crosby in a variety setting of music, humour and huest stars. When it went from the sixty to the thirty minute format in very early 1943, it became merely a shorter version of itself. In the comedians and the girlsingers came and went (there were more than twenty of these, but they will be discussed later), it was only because their tenures were longer than the guest stars. Bing, in fact, generally called them all guests, making no distinction between them. In the technical publications, where such information is preserved as a matter of record, only Bing is mentioned, along with Trotter and Carroll. Still, they were featured week after week and came to be thought of as regulars in the public mind.

Whatever the dry facts may be, KMH was consistant to the end and no information has come to light that anyone, critic or listener, ever accused it of growing flat or stale. (12)

Victor Borge did not remain long, thanks to his stunning success. He, too, soon departed for the beckoning, golden promise. His final appearance was in November of 1942. His future radio, TV and concert performance have since become legendary, adornments of international theatre. He readily credits KMH for his start in America. Today, he performs just as he did on KMH, though his English has improved...a little.

Comics came and went throughout the series, as one-time or two-time guests and occasionally a well-known comedian-actor might appear oftener but, despite Bing's remark that they were all guests, his show was not without a resident-comic until the last years. Bob Burns had been with him the longest and he was followed

(Below: George Murphy, Carroll Carroll, Ukie Sherin and Bob Hope)

 by Borge immediately. Indeed, Victor actually came on before Bob actually left.

By the time Borge was ready to strike out on his own, Bing decided it was time to innovate a little with the comic-spot. He made up his mind to essay a more familiar type of comedy-role, the so-called 'stooge'. Such humour, however, was almost alien to the hallowed Hall, coming in but rarely in the conventional guest spot. This is one of the oldest forms of comedy and was then enjoying much favour. Bob Hope was certainly making hay with it as had people like Stoopnagle & Bud and Baker and Bottle a little earlier. Hope's monologues and one-liners as well as much of his other work clearly showed their blood-relationship to the stooge-foil pattern.

Bing brought in Ukie Sherin as a guest on November 5th and they gave it a go . He joined the cast for the Christmas program that year. It can be argued that, despite Sherin's fine qualities as the new funnyman, Bing's insult-lead was perhaps not the best sort of material in keeping with his personna. To a very large proportion of his audience, he was still 'the sweet young man with the grand voice'. To them, some of the bits of business along these lines came across as somewhat painful. Hindsight, though, lends power and prescience; today, we all see what Bing was up to doing. This new material aged his Young Man image and provided him with more necessary sophistication. After all, how long can youth convincingly remain? Even fantasyland has its limitations. We all know that Bing emerged as one of the best in the business doing this kind of comedy. As he must have hoped it would, his loyal adoring audience became accustomed and even decided they enjoyed his doing it.

One brief exchange, deliberately taken not from KMH but from a film, in an effort to show how serious Bing was about it, will serve:

(Ukie): "That happens to be an old joke. That's one of my father's jokes."

(Bing): "That's one of your father's jokes?"

(Ukie): "Yeah."

(Bing): "What are you? One of your mother's?"

Ancient, venerable but popular insult-humour.

Ukie Sherin was a pianist-singer who travelled the small-time in clubs and vaudeville. His timing and natural sense of humour were his biggest assets. Carroll Carroll told me, "He also played

the ukelele (whence his nickname) and sang - badly. They all sang badly. But he was funny-looking." Decided advantages in 'show-biz'. Carroll discovered he could also work up gags and occasionally used him in that more difficult department. Ukie was low-keyed and played a good 'bottle' (stooge) but was never allowed to dominate the material; by this time, humour was spread throughout the show. Fortunately, Carroll found enough to go around.

A great many funny-people guested through the decade Bing was on for Kraft. Among them was one internationally manic type with a flair for the ridiculous in his work that recalled Groucho to mind. Jerry Colonna received his start on KMH, being allowed to leave Trotter's trombone section to do it. He soon joined Bob Hope, taking on the foil position with great success for himself and Hope. Bob, though not as yet the superstar he was to become, appeared on several memorable broadcasts with Bing, especially during the latter years. Early on, in 1937, he demonstrated his astonishing rapport with Crosby in their duets and routines. His brash jokes were fresh breezes blowing across a parched landscape or tired dialects, ancient wheezes, 'dutch' and baggy-pants. What is more, he turned Bing on to do the same, thus prefiguring and even post-figuring the Ukie Sherin interlude.

Jerry Lester arrived early on the KMH scene and departed much the same way. His comedy was quiet and friendly, then much admired on

(15) Jerry Lester arrived early on the KMH scene and departed the same way. His comedy was quiet and friendly, then much admired on radio. He was assigned the host job on summer shows for some years (as was Bob Burns). Others showing up on the KMH doorstep, smiles at the ready, were film comics like Andy Devine (who had once been a leading man), Rags Ragland, comfortable Frank McHugh, Alan Hale Senior, Bert Lahr, bluff ungenial Bill Frawley, snide, unsensible Ed 'Archie' Gardner, Alan Reed. Reed had been Buddy Bregman and he would become Fred Flintstone but he was Falstaff Openshaw on KMH. There was 'Glad ta zee ya' Phil Silvers and there was non-musician Mischa Auer, who nevertheless performed a forgettable piece on the piano, using grapefruit in place of his fingers. There was huffy, smart-pants Jack Carson and Richard Haydn. Haydn managed the impossible by talking out of his mouth and nose at the same time, or seemed to. Alan Jenkins, Donald O'Connor, Keenan Wynn... Frank Morgan, Jack Oakie, Charlie Ruggles... Lou Holtz, Edward Everett Horton, Milton Berle...

Equality came early on KMH. Some of the greatest and best women comedians were given equal time. Among them was Judy Canova, who kept insisting that she was an opera-singer type and a clown too. Eve Arden, Joan Davis, Lucille Ball and Cass Daley. The exchanges between her, Bing and Ken Carpenter are still wonderfully funny to hear and are only topped by her gosh-awful vocal characterizations.

Nearly all of them went onwards and/or upwards from KMH days. Several comics got their start then while many others were aided in their upward climb. One overheated radio critic rhapsodized, "It was a weekly cornucopia of bright laughter blended with Mr Crosby's vocal gems and poured through a golden horn".

Such glory days! And we who were there to 'tune in' any old Thursday night, sometimes in our youthful, heedless ways, actually wandered off down the street to play a little sandlot ball or flirt with a neighbourhood girl. Confessions of a misspent youth.

Of them all, those mentioned and those not, it remains to be said the Bing also became a comedian, as has been shown, while with Kraft. Besides consolidating his public image, always the most important facet in a performer's career and gaining and additional invaluable ten years if mike-side experience and exposure, Bing was enabled to work with other excellent professionals on both sides of the microphone. His chosen metier, light comic, is one of the most difficult to do well consistantly. We all know just how well he succeeded at it. His comedic feeling, his banter form of delivery remained with him all the rest of his days and was his second bench-mark after his singing. Beyond this, Bing owed to KMH muc the great flow of audience love that came to him. There are thos

still active in the industry who will tell you that he gained most of his remarkable staying power by the work he did for Kraft, because it clinched him in the public mind as the carefree, breezy, affable person he carried into films, onto phonogmaph records and across the spectrum of more radio, television and the concert stage.

Whatever your opinion may be of all this, it seems certain that any future evaluation of Bing must include his work on KMH in order to make a sound assessment. As the STAR of those years he was provided a vehicle of excellent structure and content by John Scott Trotter and Carroll Carroll, along with the unseen and mostly unheard subordinates. They did indeed have a decided impact on whatever he was going to do afterwards, The Kraft Company, as they call themselves today, was a sponsor that Bing said left them alone and Carroll has said left them alone most of the time. That was unusual then and it is unusual today, where chart-ratings have largely replaced program content.

Bing Crosby was not the same star who began so bravely that early December day in 1935 that he was when he sailed off with an idea in the spring of 1946. He would never be that Bing Crosby again.

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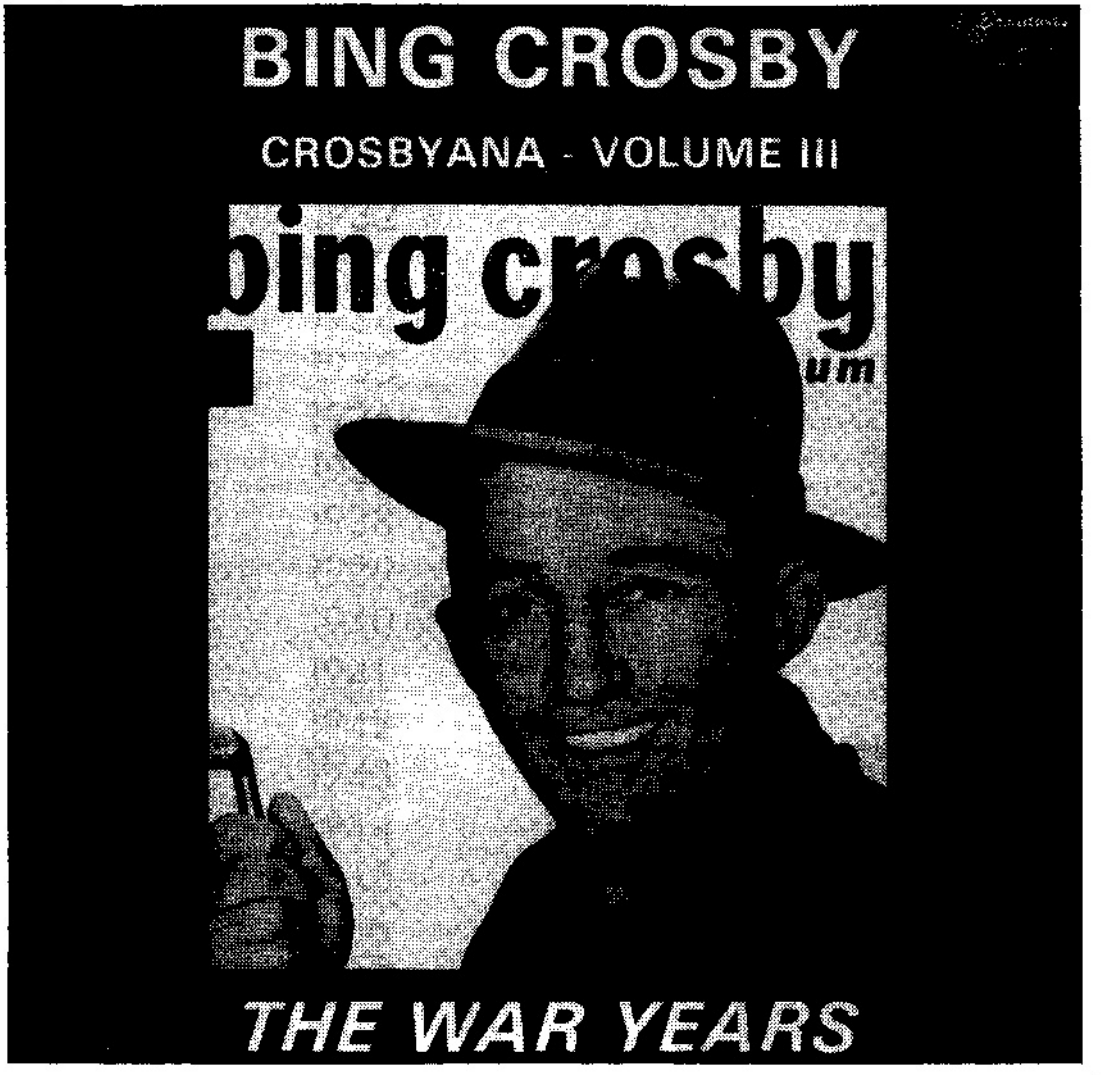
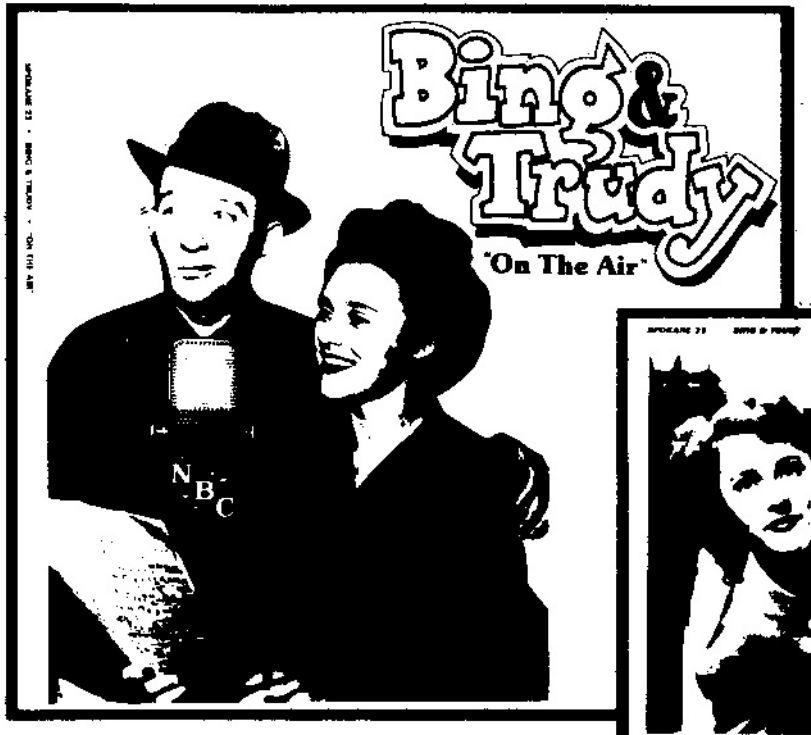
NEXT ISSUE: THE GIRL SINGERS AND FEATURED SINGING GROUPS ON KMH.

NEW RECORDS



CROSBYANA VOL III - THE WAR YEARS - Broadway Intermission BR

This new release, available through the club, features a selection of Crosby tracks from V-DISCS. A number come from radio broadcasts but several are specially recorded. Tracks: Small Fry, Wait til the sun shines Nellie/In the Good Old Summertime/Let Me Call You Sweetheart/For Me and My Gal (special singalong numbers), Medley from 'Here Is My Heart, You Call Everybody Darlin', Toast to Irving Berlin (with Jolson), Dear Old Girl, These Foolish Things, Pennies from Heaven Medley, I'll Get By, Down By the River, Only Forever, That Sly old Gentleman, Pennies from Heaven and I Promise You.



BING AND TRUDY 'ON THE AIR' - SPOKANE 23

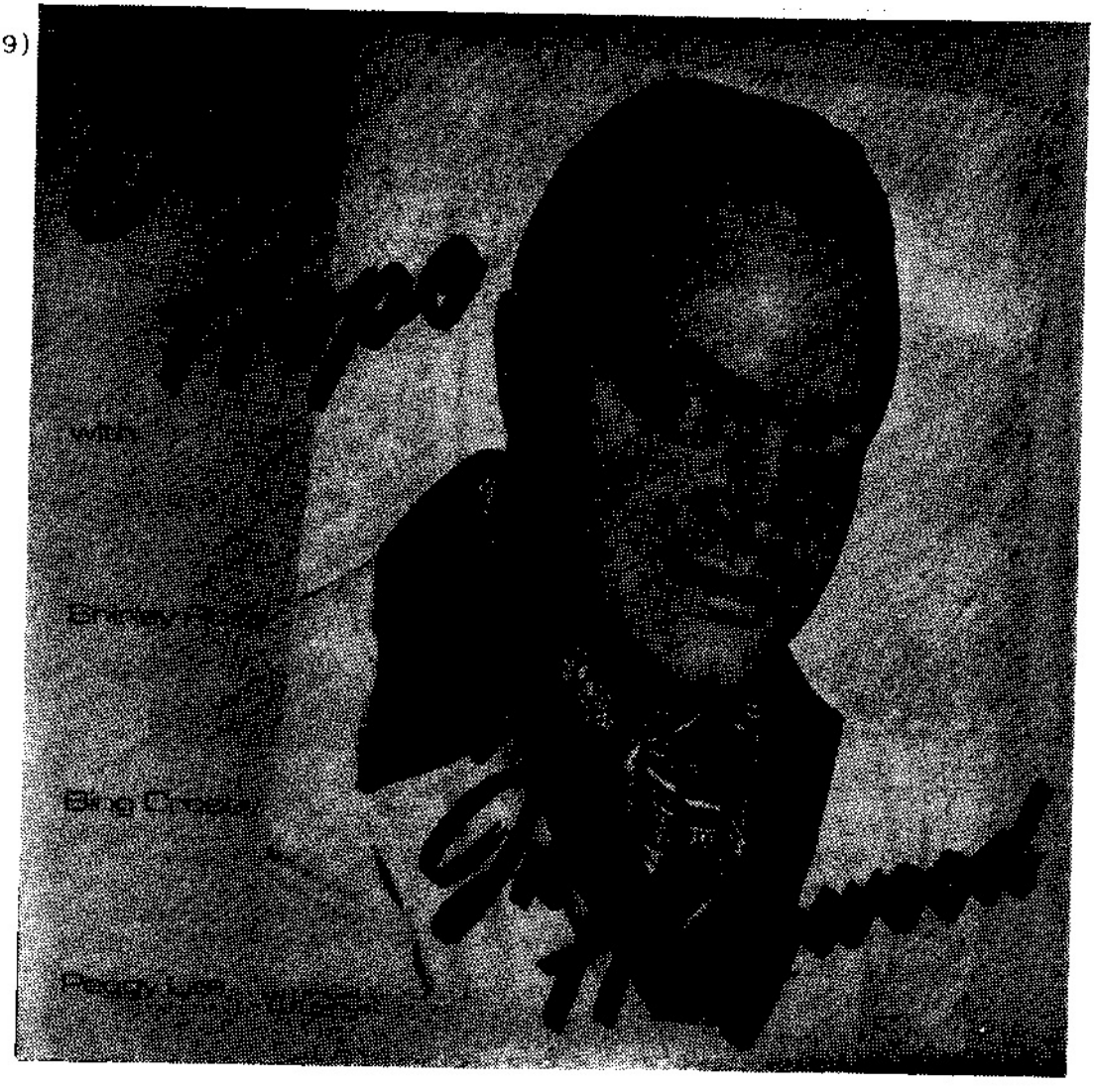
Must be two years since I first mentioned this record, but due to various delays it has not been released until now!

Bing and Trudy duet on Constantly, Hit the Road to Dreamland, My Heart Stood Still, You'll never know, You Took Advantage of Me, Wait For Me Mary, People will say We're in Love, The Right Kind of Love, One Alone, Stormy Weather, My Ideal, My Shining Hour, Oh! What a Beautiful Morning and The Way You Look Tonight.

Members who ordered and paid for this record will be sent their copies automatically. All others, please write again. Details follow shortly.

BING IN THE THIRTIES - VOL 6 - SPOKANE 27

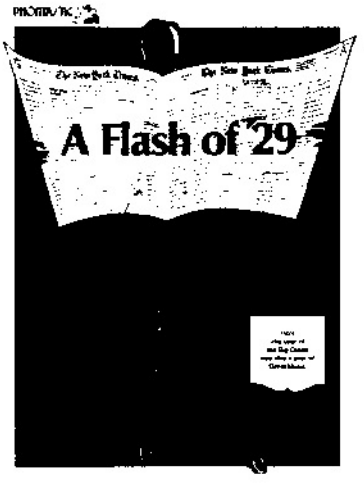
The latest in the 'Ed Rice' tapes LPS, this one features: Small Fry, Now It Can Be Told, Ride Tenderfoot Rise, Kentucky Babe, Garden of the Moon, You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby, Ya Got Me, Red Wing, My Reverie, Dipsy Doodle, Who Blew Out the Flame, Lullaby

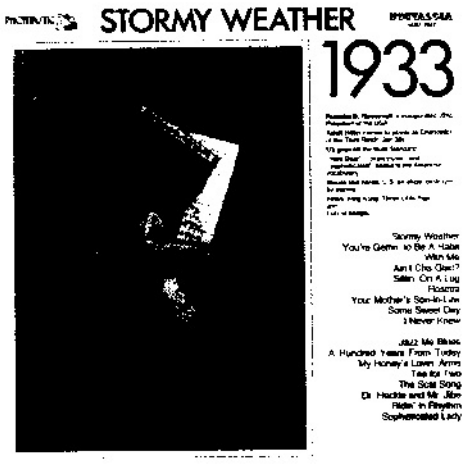


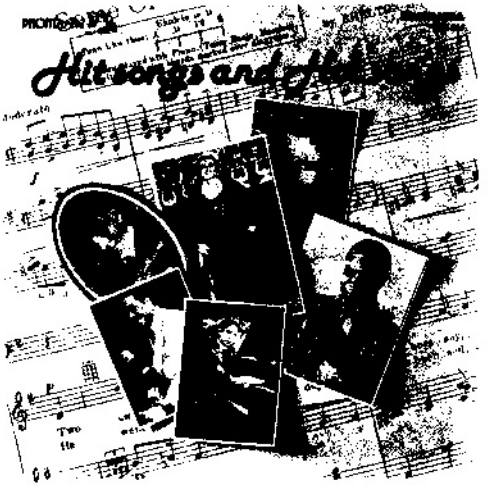
(Bing & Trudy cont.) in Rhythm, Hurry Home, When you're a Long Long Way From Home, Funny Old Hills, I Cried For You, Old Folks, Lonesome.)

BOB HOPE IN HOLLYWOOD - MCA (Australian) - 906-1

You'll read more about this interesting new local release elsewhere in the newsletter. It features ten sides cut by Hope for Decca between 1938 and 1952, six as duets with Bing, two of which are unissued takes.







The tracks are: Penthouse Serenade, Put it There Pal (alt), Thanks For the Memory, Road to Morocco (alt), Two Sleepy People, The Lady's in Love With You, Road to Bali, Merry-Go-Runaround, Hoot Mon, Chicago Style. This disc is available through most record shops.

ABOUT THE FOUR COVERS SHOWN ABOVE

These LP's are from a series of imports on the "Phontastic" label, each of which features a jazz-orientated nostalgia collection from the late-20's, early 30's. Bing features on one track of each of the above. If the Bentleigh Sewing and Record centre doesn't have copies, maybe the importer could point you in the right direction. Jazz Import Services, PO Box 1160, City Rd, Vic 3205. (03) 531 7634.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL BING CROSBY - VOL 3 (1928)

The third LP in this excellent series is now to hand, and I'm happy to report that the standard of re-processing remains as high as ever.
This discs features a further 14 tracks ranging from the Rhythm Boys "From Monday On (Jan 12, 1928) through to "From Monday On" (!) (take 6) with the Whiteman Band (Feb 28th) Details next page of how you can order this.

GUS ARNHEIM & HIS COCOA-NUT GROVE ORCHESTRA 1931. (Take 2 Records, TT112)

I guess that most collectors have fantasised what it would be like to have a radio that could tune in 1930/31 so that they could hear Bing live with the Arnheim band. Well, on two tracks of this remarkable LP, you actually can! The bulk of the tracks come from radio transcription discs made in a studio by Arnhiem for distribution to other stations, but two of the tracks actually come from a LIVE 1931 broadcast. And what a magic experience it is! There's

Bing, just before he became nationally famous, having a great old time before the microphone. There's heaps of 'atmosphere' from the live audience around him and ad lib comments from Harry Barris, Loyce Whiteman and Jack Oakie, who were also on the bandstand. The first track features Bing singing a dance tempo version of "Out of Nowhere" which is great, but the magic number is a song called "What Is It" which he performs as a duet with Loyce Whiteman. Bing is in wonderful voice, throwing in all sorts of ad libs as he and Barris and Oakie try to break up miss Whiteman. This really is a track for collectors and anyone else who appreciates Bing's 1931 voice. I've never heard anything else like it from this period. Should you buy this LP for just this one track? You bet!!!

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RECORDS YOU CAN ORDER THROUGH THE CLUB - AND HOW YOU CAN ORDER THEM
****

Of the records review in this issue, we can order the following for you, sent AIR MAIL from overseas. Please send cheque or money order, made payable to "The Victorian Bing Crosby Society" for the total amount. All prices are Aust $, local members only.

CROSBYANA VOL III - THE WAR YEARS:	$13.00
BING & TRUDY 'ON THE AIR'	$13.00
GUS ARNHIEM - 1931	$13.00

CLOSING DATE FOR THESE ORDERS IS JUNE 30TH - LATE ORDERS WILL BE RETURNED!

THE CHRONOLOGICAL BING CROSBY VOL 3

This disc will be available direct from the club from mid-July, although it will be in the shops much sooner. Club price is $11.00, one dollar more than last time thanks to the dollar drop. If ordering by mail, please ADD $3.00 for postage and packing.

States other than Victoria - we have a list of shops stocking the records. Ask and we will send you a copy.

ORDERING U.S. RECORDS DIRECT: If you have a Visa card, you can easily order from the USA. Just quote your number. A reputable supplier is: RARE RECORDS, PO BOX 10518, GLENDALE, CAL. 91209, USA.

(23).

Could this be the biggest selling disc since White Christmas?

White Christmas is the biggest selling disc of all time.

Nothing has ever come close. Then just 18 months ago another disc was released; an integrated software package called Lotus 1-2-3.

A catchy number that outsold everything.

Nothing has ever come close.

Now there's the follow-up. Symphony from Lotus. It takes the benefits of 1-2-3 then adds a few ideas of its own.

The spreadsheet, for instance, is even bigger (8192 rows by 256 columns, to be precise).

The database is even better.

Its graphics verge on the artistic (bar charts, line charts, not to mention exploded pie charts). All in colour.

Next, Symphony throws in word processing that matches the speed and power of any popular WP program.

It adds communications that let you chat with computers anywhere.

And to cap it all you can put everything on the screen at the same time.

So that when you change the numbers in one window the graphics change in another.

But for all this, Symphony is easier to learn and simpler to operate than programs that do half as much.

To find out more about Lotus Symphony and the name of an authorised dealer call Teledata on 01-200 0200.

It may not capture hearts in quite the same way as Bing's disc, but for millions of executives it'll be music to their ears.

Lotus™

The hardest working PC software in the world.

LP'S AT A DISCOUNT: Available to club members from - Cunninghams Hi-Fi and Records centre, 348 Centre Road Brighton, AND The Bentleigh Sewing and Record Centre, 348 Centre Rd, Bentleigh.

THE QLD. SOCIETY REPORT

From Les O'Donnell

We have now formed a sub-committee to handle our programme, advertising, etc, and have mapped out a programme for the rest of the year. April 20th, a picnic lunch (see report below), June 18th - a film evening, August 10th - a musical evening, October 12th - Crosby/Jolson night, December 14th - a Xmas party with movies, games and quizzes.

APRIL 30TH PICNIC LUNCH

The day was a huge success with everyone having a terrific time. Everyone brought their own picnic lunch while the club supplied a musical programme under the heading of "Well Known Singers of The Crosby Era - 1926 - 1977", so that everyone had something they liked during the day.

The festivities started at 11.00 am and continued throught to 4.00 pm. One of the highlights of the day was our 'Mystery Singer' competition - the 'Mystery Singer' turned out to be our President, Vic Bridger.

We also conducted a Musical Quiz on Bing in which we played a short extract from Bing's ten most popular recordings and asked members to write them in order of popularity. You would be surprised at how few people managed to get ANY in order!

Why don't you try this in your magazine and see how many members get them right?

(Good idea Les, we'll do that RIGHT NOW. A prize of the LP "Bing and Al - the Golden Medley Duets" goes to the FIRST member listing these 10 songs in order of popularity: Pennies From Heaven, Swinging on a Star, White Xmas, Moonlight Becomes You, Sweet Lelani, Please, Blue of the Night, True Love, I Surrender Dear, Just One More Chance. PLEASE, anyone from Queensland who was at the picnic, refrain from entering!!! BM)

Our picnic was held at the lovely home of Ron and Dawn Gillet at Moggil, near Ipswich on the Brisbane River. The outing was well attended and helped to put a few more dollars into the Society's bank balance to get us started on buying 16mm projectors for our use.

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WHAT CROSBY MOVIES DO YOU WANT TO SEE?
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Results of our February questionaire

Over the past seven years, we have screened the majority of Bing's movies from the early 30's to the mid-1940's. As we are soon going to start repeat screenings, we thought we'd ask the members what they wanted to see next. So at our February meeting, we handed out a questionaire which requested those present to list, in order, the ten Crosby movies they most wanted to see.

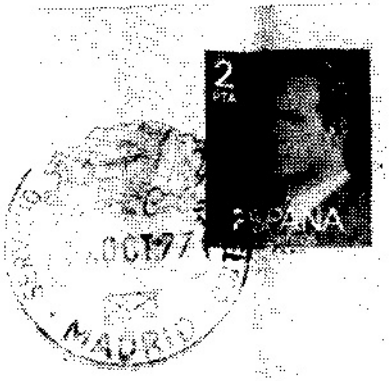
To simplify the process of working out which movies were the most popular, we used a preferential system of working out the votes, i.e. Your first preference received 10 points, your second - 9 points, your third - 8 points, and so on - down to 1 point for your tenth preference.

The results were very interesting, and fair, as even those movies that received only one or two first preference votes rated better than those say that received a couple of two's and a three.

1. WE'RE NOT DRESSING (112)
2. PENNIES FROM HEAVEN (107)
3. MISSISSIPPI (91)
4. GOING MY WAY (81)
5. COLLEGE HUMOUR (72)
6. HIGH SOCIETY (58)
7. BIRTH OF THE BLUES (57)
8. THE STAR MAKER (53)
9. BLUE SKIES (50)
10. THE BIG BROADCAST (50)

Interesting the see HIGH SOCIETY up on the list. Although one of Bing's most popular movies, it is still regularly shown on TV.

And what were Bing's movies you least wanted to see? Road to Bali (2), Say One For Me (3), Road to Zanzibar (9), Stagecoach (10), Just For You (10). Sorry, there was one film I missed. Robin and the 7 Hoods didn't get a single vote! Well, at least we now know what movies we'll be screening at our next ten meetings.



Several years ago, someone in Spain produced a number of souvenir envelopes commemorating Bing's passing in that country. These envelopes are unusual in that they feature an actual photograph of Bing pasted on the front. This is the third envelope of this type that I have seen. Can anyone in the membership shed a little light on these. How many were produced, by whom were they produced, and where were they sold?

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BITS 'N' PIECES

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* We can still supply copies of the video "RARE MOMENTS WITH BING CROSBY" - a half hour of some of the scarcest Crosby film around. See last issue for details.

* Kathryn Crosby is working on Vol 2 of her book "My Life With Bing". No publication date as yet.

* THE K.M.H. BOOK - the most comprehensive listing of Bings Kraft Music Hall Broadcasts is still available from the club. Just $5 plus $2 postage within Australia. Overseas members, contact your local rep.

(Another nice mention from Philip Brady in "SCENE" magazine earlier this month. Once again, many many thanks, Phil!)

SCENE — MAY 4 — MAY 10, 1985

THIS current week marks the birth of Harry Lillis Crosby 82 years ago in Tacoma Washington.

Bing Crosby's birth certificate states categorically that he was born on May 3, 1903 though many historians mention May 1 and 2 while the year varies from 1901 to 1904.

Even tombstones lie!

When his widow Kathryn had Bing's memorial erected she was one year out.

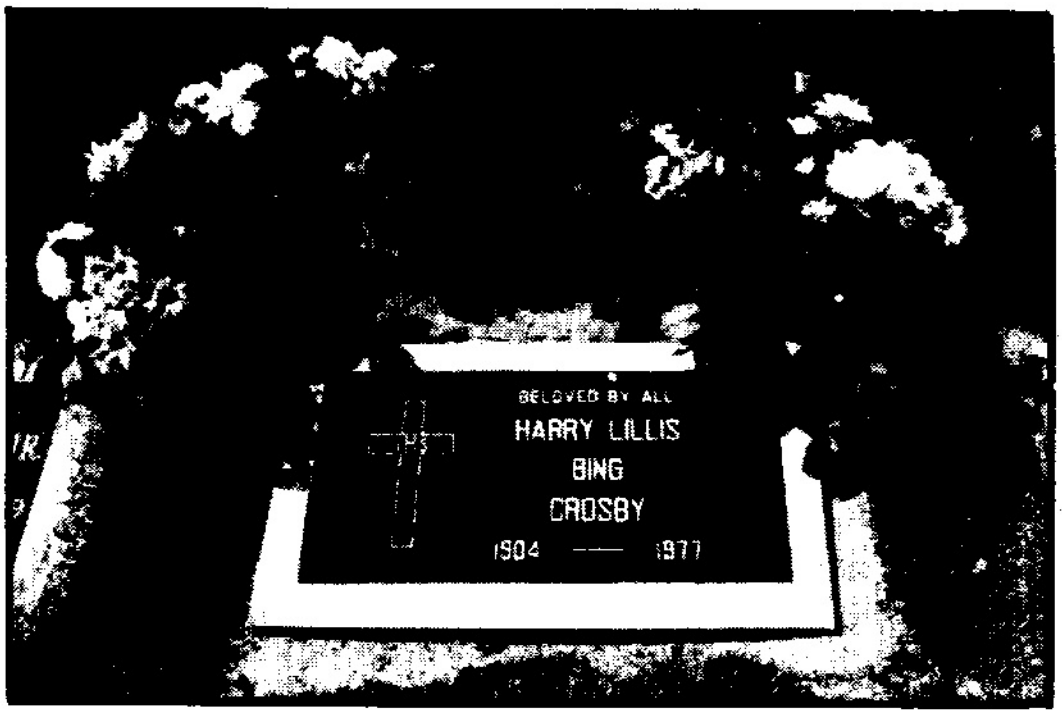
I took this shot last year at the Holy Cross cemetery close by MGM's Culver City studios.

Bing's first wife, Dixie Lee, is buried beside him. A couple of tombstones away are the remains of Bella Lugosi, the original movie Dracula.

Many famous names are to be there like Charles Boyer, Sharon Tate and Pat O'Brien.

Without exception the rich and the famous have simple headstones without any of the Hollywood razzamatazz. (Al Jolson is the exception but his grave is in the Jewish cemetery near the Los Angeles airport.)

Fans of Bing can buy all his early recordings dating back to 1926 in a series of LPs exclusive to the Victorian Crosby Society members. You can join by writing to PO Box 422, South Melbourne, 3205.



BING'S grave . . . even his wife got the date wrong.

PEOPLE July 30, 1969

Norman Banks hunts down Bing Crosby

The agent said "you can't" but Norman Banks knew that he could. What's more the star saw him twice — once as arranged and again as a personal favour.

I WAS stunned when the cable cancelling my interview with Bing came five days before I was due to fly off to the U.S. to see him.

The cable was signed by his agent and read: "Bing Crosby has not returned to this country as yet, and scheduled dates for recordings have been cancelled stop Your scheduled interview will have to be postponed stop We will inform you as soon as we have a firm date set."

This was not the Bing Crosby I knew, the man I first interviewed way back in 1936 and from whom I've received a present every Christmas since.

Over the years, some people had told me that he was completely unpredictable and unreliable, but I'd always believed this was probably because they'd been unreliable where he was concerned, and taken advantage of his kindness.

I was convinced he's never let down anyone for whom he had any regard, and I felt he did have a regard for me.

So, without telling anyone about the cable—including 3AW, which was sending me to tape the interview—I flew off on the arranged day.

I did have other reasons for doing this. I'd arranged appointments with several others whom I wanted to interview during the same week, including the chief warden of San Quentin, and the very distinguished Negro lawyer, Counselman Thomas Bradley.

I couldn't let all these people down at such short notice and I was convinced somehow that I'd also get to see Bing. If only I could find him and tell him I'd arrived!

At one stage, it was starting to look so hopeless that I began to feel I'd better dash down and interview L.B.J. at home in Johnston City.

BUT, after spending a small fortune travelling hundreds of miles by taxi and making all sorts of long-distance calls, I vindicated my belief in positive thinking. Really, there was an object lesson in this. That nothing is impossible. I had faith in my capacity to get him because I knew Crosby.

And what he did for me when I finally tracked him down proved I was right. He was both astonished and remorseful. I think he'd heard neither the proposal about the interview nor that it had been cancelled.

Bing had been in Mexico and I was able to trail him all the way from the Behar Peninsula through Cold Water Canyon till nobody seemed to know where he was.

I tried everyone in TV, radio and screen and at last got on to Larry, his brother, in the plush new offices of Bing Crosby in Beverly Hills.

"Why didn't you get in touch with me direct the first day, Norman?"

Norman Banks and his friend Bing Crosby. Bing's home is a really lovely three-storeyed French chateau 35 miles outside San Francisco.

were his first words when I sat down. Which was easily explained because the phone number is changed from month to month because of threats on Bing's life, and other threats to kidnap his children.

The changes obviously confused him, too, because the number he told me and I took down differed from the one he wrote himself and handed to a friend who was with me!

Larry rang Bing and told me later, "I reprimanded him because he'd let you down, and Bing was horrified. I'm sure he didn't know."

You can imagine my own horror when I rang the number Larry had given me and the girl said there was no such one. I was at my wits' end till my friend Jim Dewar realised the discrepancy.

This was the night before we were due to fly back to Australia, and I had so many commitments at home I knew I simply couldn't change my plane.

SO you can imagine my relief when the valet answered and said, "Yes, Mr Crosby is here." And on came Bing, full of apologies. "I've got to go down to Los Angeles tomorrow," he said. "But tell you what. Can you come out here at eight in the morning and I'll give you an hour?"

Then, later, another ring. "Can you make it earlier? Say seven. I have to be in L.A. at 10 for a day's filming, and I can't let the crew down."

At this stage, I was staying in the Hilton Hotel in San Francisco and I was up at 5 a.m. to make the 35-mile drive out to his home in a very posh area of exclusive homes in lovely bushland called Hillsboro.

Jim was with me and for a few minutes we just stood there admiring this really lovely French chateau of three-storeys that is Bing's home.

All of a sudden, a couple of huge hounds came out baying so loudly they scared the wits out of us.

Then, with a thud, a window shot up and this tremendous voice yelled: "Shut up, you bastards, or I'll kick you in the . . ." That was the other Bing. The authoritarian. At the tone of his voice, the dogs fled for their lives.

Bing took us into his study for coffee and there I did what I considered to be the best interview I've ever done in my life. We twitted each other, joked about the past and present, and talked about his family. He told me his wife, Kathy Grant, would be sorry to miss me because she was away touring with a repertory company.

The library is a huge room, full of colour, warmth and with a very lived-in look. Its walls are lined with stacks of books, expensive oils and one of these covers the TV set which is on one wall 7ft above the floor.

I remarked to Bing that the artist would be put out if he knew his work had its back to the room for the sake of TV, and he said: "On the other hand, it does hide the idiot box!"

His Oscar, which he won for "Going My Way," is in this room and there are several wonderful rugs made from the skins of animals he's shot. The big armchairs are wonderful — upholstered in a way that gives you the impression of weightless suspense — and there's a big, open fireplace to complete the picture of a beautiful room. A man's room. And Bing is all man.

When the time came to go, I played back the last few minutes of tape— and all that came out was a few intermittent words that didn't make sense!

I was completely distraught. Here I had some superb interviews with half a dozen others perfectly on tape, and I'd have scrapped every one of them for the sake of getting Bing.

We played about with the recorder to find out what was wrong, but when we did discover the fault none of us

had the skill to fix it. Besides, it was time for Bing to go.

I looked at him and said: "Bing, this is **most** important to me. I can't tell you how important, because I've come here purely to record you. Can you help me?"

He said: "Well, I've a whole day's shooting to do and it's imperative for me to be there because there's the whole crew depending on me. But I'll phone you from Los Angeles if I can possibly do a repeat."

SO, on my last day in America, I sat in my hotel room in San Francisco, on tenterhooks. Finally, at 2.30, Bing's valet rang to say that Mr Crosby could see me at Hillsboro at 5.30. My plane was leaving at 8 p.m. and you're supposed to be there an hour ahead, so you can imagine the rush I'd be in.

Meantime, I had to get the recorder fixed. In the shop I chose, they couldn't have been more helpful — or apologetic, because they said they could not fix this one. But not to worry because they'd lend me a different microphone which **should** suit. So off I went, still not positive that even this time, I'd get him on tape!

Bing has about five or six servants and his valet is a delightful, English-

born young Irishman, soft and gentle, who greeted us on our second visit in a butcher's striped apron. I was too anxious to ask why. Maybe he was cleaning the silver.

"Mr Crosby will not be long," he said, in this wonderful, soft voice. "He's just terminating a ball game with Nathaniel." I loved his use of the word "terminating."

And outside I found Bing with Nathaniel, who's about seven or eight, both dressed as baseball-players and Bing looking close to exhaustion because it's such a rugged game. And back we trooped into the library to do the second interview—which did come out to perfection.

Bing was tired. As he said, he'd travelled 1,000 miles that day then, because he believes in being a good father, had the game with Nathaniel. I can still see him swing his feet with his shabby pair of socks and baseball shoes on over the arm of the chair and relax with a sigh and his briar pipe. He was as casual and unpretentious as could be.

The second interview lacked the sparkle of the one we did at 8 a.m., but in some ways it's better. He was very tired, but he warmed to my dilemma and talked well and easily, answering me with his usual engaging humour. That he did this for me, I think, shows the greatness of Crosby.

At 65, he's 100 per cent fit, getting up at 6 a.m. every day, making play out of his work and loving his golf and fishing. But of all he does, he still best loves getting alongside a really good band and singing with it.

HE recalled his first appearance in public when he was 12 and sang "I Love You Truly," and didn't get any applause at all. And all the times he went around singing things like, "Oh, Promise Me," at weddings.

And he talked about his daughter, Mary Frances, who's nine. "You know I've got a daughter, don't you?" he said. As of course I did, because she's been with the rest of the family on his Christmas cards that have been coming every year.

"Took me a long time to have a daughter," he mused. "But one out of seven isn't a bad average." He said she was starring in a film, and described the transformation in her when she went in front of the cameras.

"When you see or hear her around the house, she's playing with yo-yos or joining in games with the boys, yet the moment she has to do any job of entertaining she suddenly becomes a new creature. I think this indicates she has real talent. She performs with aplomb."

All I send Bing each Christmas is a card, but his presents to me have been of an extraordinary variety — wallets, cigarette-cases and lighters, new-fangled pocket-knives with everything attached, the most elaborate shoe-horn I've ever seen, and a fantastic desk-calendar which tells the day and date until the end of time.

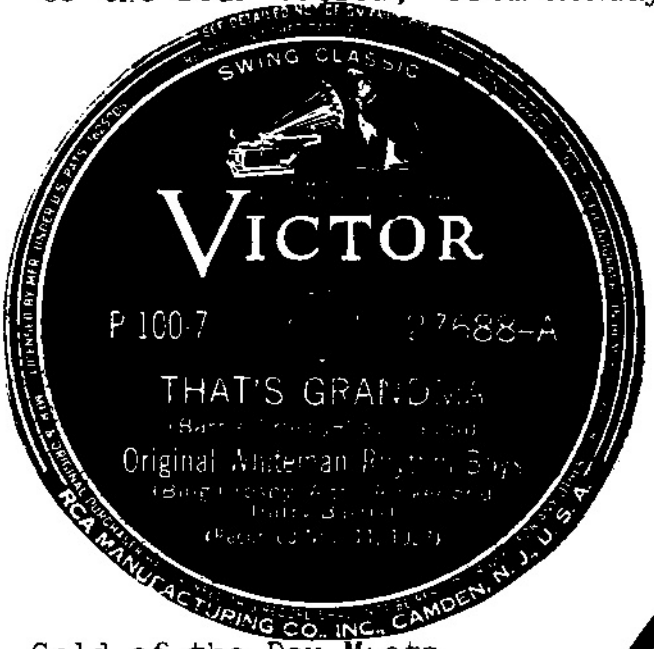
When I was leaving, just in time to make a frantic dash for the plane and we shook hands, I started to say, with all the sincerity of my gratitude for what he'd done for me — "Bing, I'll never forget . . ."

And putting his hand on my shoulder he interrupted with — "Forget it. It's been a tremendous pleasure."

And he meant it. I know he enjoyed both interviews as much as I did. ●

Bing, as all collectors know, was a man of many talents, all of which have been written about many times, save one. And that is his considerable talent as a lyricist. It is hoped that this article will help correct that oversight.

Bing's earliest published lyrics were written to tunes composed by fellow Rhythm Boy - Harry Barris. Their first effort was "That's Grandma" (1927), followed in 1928 by "From Monday On" and "What Price Lyrics", and finally in 1930, by "Everything's Agreed Upon". All four were recorded by the Rhythm Boys but unfortunately "Everything's Agreed Upon" was never released. Of the four titles, "From Monday On" was the most successful for the group.



From 1931 onwards, Bing collaborated with a number of other lyricists, the best known of these being Roy Turk and Fred Ahlert. The most famous song the three produced was "Where the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day". Incidentally, the original title reversed the order to read "Where the Gold of the Day Meets the Blue of the Night" (which makes more sense!) Bing contributed the lyric for the <u>verse</u> only with this song.

It was at this time that Bing was first becoming very popular and young hopeful composers often approached him to supply lyrics, no doubt believing that with Bing as collaborator, he would give the songs exposure and therefore ensure their success!

35) Bing obliged with lyrics, but never recorded or sang any of the songs on radio. Perhaps it's just as well when you study the lyrics to such songs as "Cutie Pie" and "Where are You - Girl of My Dreams", although one composition he should have recorded was "I Was So Alone - Suddenly You Were There". Apparently inspired by Greta Garbo's dialogue in the MGM movie "Grand Hotel", it's a beautiful ballad. I first heard it sung years ago by a female vocalist whose name eludes me now.

To me, Bing's most successful collaborations were with Ned Washington. Together they produced the lyrics to "I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance", "Love Me Tonight" and "Waltzing in a Dream". Victor Young contributed the music to all three songs.

Next we have a mystery song - "Tenderfoot". Bing contributed to the lyric under the nom-de-plume "Bill Brill" - but why, no-one knows. Even the knowledge that music publishing firms often had their headquarters in the 'Brill' Building in New York, doesn't clarify the mystery. Perhaps some reader of "The Crosby Voice" can shed a little light on the matter!

COMMERCIALLY-RELEASED CROSBY COLLABORATIONS

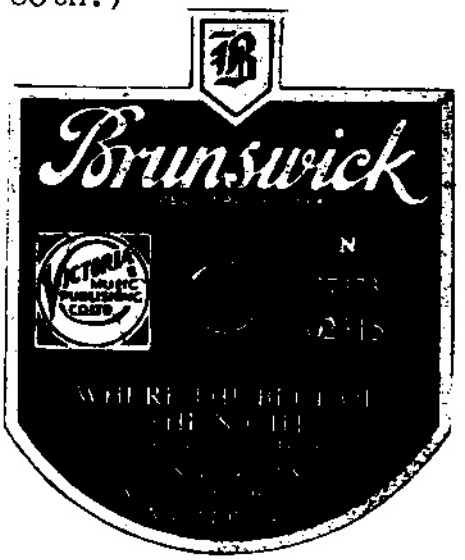
The names of the other composers follow each title in brackets.

1927 That's Grandma (Harry Barris)
1928 From Monday On (Harry Barris)
1928 What Price Lyrics (Harry Barris)
1930 Everything's Agreed Upon (Harry Barris)
1931 At Your Command (Harry Barris, Harry Tobias)
1931 Where the Blue of the Night (Roy Turk, Fred Ahlert)
1931 You Taught Me How to Love ** (H. LeBang, Don Herman)
1931 Melody of Love (Babe Goldberg)
1931 Believe Me * (James Cavanaugh, Frank Weldon)
1932 Cutsie Pie * (Red Standex, C. MacGregor)
1932 I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance (Victor Young, Ned Washington)
1932 Where Are You, Girl of My Dreams ** (Irving Bibo, Paul McVey)
1932 Love Me Tonight (Victor Young, Ned Washington)
1932 My Woman (Irving Wallman. Max Wartell)
1932 Waltzing in a Dream (Victor Young/Ned Washington)
1932 I Was So Alone, Suddenly You Were There * (L. Harline, J. Stern, G. Hamilton)
1933 I Would If I Could But I Can't (Mitchell Parish, Lanny Grey)
1953 Tenderfoot (Perry Botkin, Bob Bowen)
1975 That's What Life Is All About (Les Reed, Peter Dacre, Ken Barnes)
1977 Sail Away From Norway

* Recorded or sung by Bing on radio ** Not recorded by Bing but sung on the air. (In 1931, "Melody of Love" on Dec 18th and "You Taught Me How To Love" on Dec 30th.)

NOTE

In 1961, Bing prepared the English translation for the Italian song "Domenica" for the LP "Holiday in Europe".



BING'S "PRIVATE" SONGS

Over the years, Bing wrote the lyrics for a number of privately produced records. Many of these were parodies of well-known songs; a few were original. Some records were produced to commemorate special personal occasions; others for limited "public" exposure.

"Corinne Corinna" (parody) - recorded by Decca but unissued.

"Robins and Roses"(parody) - a tribute to Bing's bookmaker friends. Recorded by Decca, but unissued.

"Where the Turf Meets the Surf" - a private record, made at Decca, and designed to be played at the start of each race meeting at Del Mar where Bing was part-owner. Unissued commercially.

"Duke the Spook" - a private record, made at Decca, for air force pilots in World War 2. Unissued commercially.

"How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down On the Farm". A parody to entertain Armed Forces. Unissued commercially.

"A Girl For Ken Murray" (parody) - recorded by C.P. MacGregor Co. on the occasion of Ken Murray's wedding.

"Happy Birthday K.E.L.K." (parody) - also recorded at the above studio as an invitation to Elko Nevada.

"Mayor of Elko County" - same recording studio. Bing's acceptance song after being voted Mayor of Elko County.

"Anthem of the Clams" - private recording to commemorate the annual fishing trip made by Bing, Jimmy Van Heusen and Phil Harris.

"Balling the Jack" - another private recording made at the MscGregor studio after a hunting trip with Lori Woods and Phil Harris.

"African Safari" - A similiar record, produced in 1968 and featuring parodies to a number of songs. Recorded at Decca.

"St John's Hospital" (parody). A tribute to the Doctors and the hospital following Bing's gaul stone operation.

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NOTE: A number of the above tracks are available to members on a newly released cassette in the club library. For details on the tape, "Collectors' Items 3", see elsewhere in this issue.

WILLIAM CLIFFORD WEEDEN (1913 - 1985)

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of our good friend, William Clifford (Bill) Weeden. Bill was Founder and President of The International Sinatra Society, and it was in that role that we of the Victorian Bing Crosby Society first came to know him in the mid-1970's. In the early days of this group, Bill provided us with guidance and advice and remained in close touch over the years.

Born in England in 1913, music was the great love of Bill's life. As a young man, he sang in his church choir, and became an accomplished piantist. During World War 2, he formed the Eltham Studio Band which won the All British Dance Band Championship in 1946. In 1952, Bill, his wife Lil and young son Bill Jr migrated to Australia where Bill combined his love for music with a daytime profession of Industrial Chemist. In 1974, he founded the Sinatra Society of Australia which today boasts a 2000+ membership. Bill was a good man and a good friend. We will all miss him.

(39)

PETITION FOR BING CROSBY COMMEMORATIVE STAMP

To: Mr. Hugh McGonicle
Philatelic Communications Specialists
Stamp Division Branch
United States Postal Service
474 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, D.C. 20260-6300

Dear Mr. McGonicle

This letter is a petition to request the Philatelic Communications Specialist Stamp Division of the United States Postal Service to approve a commemorative stamp for Bing Crosby to be issued, October, 1987 realizing that approval must be made two years before issuance.

Very few in the entertainment arts can parallel Bing Crosby. His songs not only produced some of the top grossing records in the music industry they instilled a sense of warmth, hope and love that guided this nation through the great depression as well as the dark days of World War II and his rendition of Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" has been synonymous with the holiday season ever since it was first recorded in the early forties.

Bing's radio and television shows, his personal appearances and his movies gave the same feeling and inspiration. Whether laughing with him as Bing, Bob and Dorothy traveled through the road pictures to carrying moon beams home in a jar in "Going My Way", his message was one of decency without which a great Democratic nation could not survive.

As success came to Bing Crosby, he shared it with the rest of us through his genius as an entrepreneur. His insight, encouragement and financing gave birth in this country to magnetic recording, revolutionizing entertainment technology as well as helping to give rise to our high tech industries. "You can thank Bing Crosby for every audio tape deck, video recorder, VCR and computer tape drive in use today." (Peter Hammar, creator of the Ampex museum, Redwood City, CA)

Using his prestige and popularity as a star Bing helped a small company become a giant amoung food corporations. Their innovative process of concentrating and freezing the juice affected great changes throughout the industry. "Why, this orange juice thing is the wonder of the grocery world, ask anybody" (Minute Maid's president quoted in Time Magazine, Oct. 18, 1948)

Bing Crosby was a true patriot. During World War II Bing traveled the battle fronts raising the spirits of our troops with his great talent. He led bond drives. But he did more than just that. Using his own funds Crosby Research Foundation was founded, late 1940, to aid the national defense effort. Inventors with bright ideas were helped to develop their products to the manufacturing stage. Out of the foundation came many inventions that supported the military in defeating the Axis. Such ideas as a ground-speed indicator for planes that increased the accuracy of bomb hits; a magnetized drawing board for bombers and submarines which kept instruments from falling off; an automatic stabilizer for target planes; a detector for ice on planes that registered the first faint film of ice and started the de-icer; a gold-plated mirror device which picked up the ultra red rays from an airplane's exhaust. "In one night, working in conjunction with range finders, it was responsible for bringing down 185 German planes over England." (Foundation officials quoted in Business Week, August 8, 1942)

A sportsman involved in golf, baseball, horse racing, fishing and hunting, Bing was, also, supportive of conservation through his efforts with Ducks Unlimited. His interest in education is exhibited by his funding of library at Gonzaga University. His work for charity is legendary, from raising money for youth organizations through the Crosby Pro-Am golf tournement held annually at Pebble Beach, which was one of the first big celebrity/charity events in the U.S., to his entertaining with his wife, Kathryn and children, Harry, Mary Francis and Nathaniel, each Christmas, at Laguna Honda hospital in San Francisco.

A rewakening of interest in Bing and his contributions to our culture is starting to take place both in this country and around the world. When the blue of the night settles over England while the gold of the day shines in Australia, Bing is remembered. These two countries as well as the United States and Canada have active Crosby organizations honoring him and a new club is being organized in Brazil. At a recent gathering of Bing's Friends and Collectors in Millbrae, Ca., a door prize was won by a member who lives in Holland. The Bing Crosby Historical Society has members in twelve countries.

This shows that Bing's spirit is still very much alive and that his life and works should be celebrated by the issuance of a Bing Crosby Commemorative Stamp.

Signed.

NAME ADDRESS DATE

THE B.C.H.S. REPORT

(OPPOSITE YOU CAN SEE A PETITION INITIATED BY THE BING CRSOBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO HAVE A COMMEMORATIVE STAMP ISSUED FEATURING BING. KEN TWISS WRITES:)

The stamp att empt is going wild. A member in California is forming a committee chaired by Phil Harris definitely and perhaps Bob Hope will join him when he hears about it. A lot of movie names would be on the committee.

As soon as approval is given for the stamp, I am going to write to many foreign countries to urge them to issue a Crosby stamp to coincide with the U.S. issue.

THE BRITAIN-YOU-NEVER-SEE TOUR

The BCHS has organized a special packaged tour of the U.K for U.S. residents, and they sent us a colour brochure outlining the details.

Leaving September this year, the holiday covers the best-known UK attractions, but also includes such unique highlights as:

Sept 22: "Bing Crosby tour members will be driven to and from Leeds for the annual dinner meeting of the International Crosby Circle."

Sept 23: Reception and buffet for all tour members in private home, hosted by the local Bing Crosby Photo Club.

Sept 24: 25 26: Two days touring Scotland. Visit world famous St Andrews gold course, and Gleneagles, said to be the world's most beautiful, and where Bing Crosby loved to play.

Oct 1: Private visit to St Mary's church with playing of the bells that inspired Bing Crosby's "Bells of St Marys". On to the seaside resort of Brighton to tour the theatre where Bing sang his very last concert.

Oct 2 - 5 London. Bing Crosby tour members may wish to visit the BBC, film sets at Elstree and recording studios. On Friday there will be a private tour of the Palladium Theatre to see the commemorative plaque to Bing.

(Now that sounds like a travelling holiday with a difference. From all reports, it's selling well. Good luck to Ken Twiss.)

TRADING POST

HOWARD LEVINE, 10925 Northwest 4th St, Coral Springs, Fla 33065 USA

WANTS:

Australian Decca - Y5013 I wished on the mpon/Takes 2 to make a bargain
Y5028 I wish I were Alladin/From the top of your head
Y5029 Two for tonight/Without a word of warning
Y5075 The moon was yellow/2 cigarettes in the dark
Y5098 It ain't necessarily so/I got plenty of nuttin
Y5126 House Jack built for Jill/Beyong compare
Y5162 My little buckeroo/What is love?
Y5228 Now it can be told/Summertime
Y5249 Let's waltz for old time sake/Blues Serenade
Y5360 East side of Heaven/Sing a song of sunbeams
Y5598 The singing hills/Sierra Sue

ALSO: V Discs 24, 28, 81, 128 and 221.

ALSO: When you dream about Hawaii - Alt take on S. African Brunswick
Thanks - the Philip Crosby Chevron 45 rpm single
Sunday in Hollywood - Bing ' Ann Blyth - World Horizons Records
Happy Anniversary Songs - Aust. Festival LP - FL 30360
The Wilfred Thomas Show - Aust. Festival FL 30965
Bing sings whilst Bregman swings - Aust. Verve LP MGV-2020

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RADIO HERITAGE PRODUCTIONS, 517 S.W. 4th Ave, Portland, Oregon 97204 USA

HAS FOR SALE: "THE CROSBY YEARS"

Thirteen hour-long nroadcasts, produced by John Salisbury, as heard on Oregin Public Radiom Oct 3 - Dec 26, 1982. PLUS a full hour tonus production containing Crosby items from a forthcoming series.

The programmes are on 7 120 minute cassettes, and the entire set must be ordered. U.S. Price: $162.50 inc postage. Overseas air mail: $165.00.

Please make all payments to: RADIO HERITAGE PRODUCTIONS.

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MORE ON THE NEW BOB HOPE LP REVIEWED ON PAGE 19

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As you may remember, we said that this LP contained alternate takes on two Crosby/Hope duets - "Put it There Pal" and "Road to Morocco". What we didn't say was where the takes came from! According to the cover notes, it now transpires that from 1942 to 1949, Decca U.S. recorded everything from every session on 16" transcription discs! All the takes, all the talking, all the mistakes - everything. And these records still exist!

Our diligent U.S. rep Richard Pearson quickly shot off a letter to MCA records (who now hold the rights), asking the obvious question. He received the following reply from one Steve Hoffman, Research and Development Coordinator.

"Thank you very much for your letter and your compliments. I love Bing Crosby too. There has been a lot of resistence here to Bing Crosby reissues. I believe one of the problems is his estate not cooperating with us. The Bing's Hollywood series will never be reissued in its original form because we have lost the rights to those exact packages.

Regarding alternate takes, we have literally hundreds of these. I am always hoping for a Crosby reissue series but so far my attempts have been thwarted for one reason or another.

I would like to get the names of the various Crosby Societies. I always like to get feedback from fans.

Thanks again for writing and believe me, I have Bing's fans best interest at heart. One of these days, I will be able to release the ultimate Crosby package. Until then, we can only wait."

For those who would like to take Steve Hoffman up on his offer to "get feedback from Crosby fans", the address is:

MCA RECORDS, 70 UNIVERSAL CITY PLAZA, UNIVERSAL CITY, CALIFORNIA 91608 USA.

And if you live in the States and would like to ring, the phone number is: (818) 508 4000

On the Road To the 19th Hole

He's been playing golf for so long, he claims he washes his golf balls with Epsom salts. He confesses that his swing has been described as that of a polo player without a horse. And he needs scorecards that aren't allergic to erasers. These one-liners have been teed up from "Bob Hope's Confessions of a Hooker: My Lifelong Love Affair With Golf," soon to be published by Doubleday, as a comic antidote for all those tortuous tomes on how to hit the ball slightly straight.

Written in collaboration with Dwayne Netland, this book sounds as it should — like a Bob Hope monologue at his Desert Classic in Palm Springs, Calif., where the PGA Tour opened yesterday.

"Lee Trevino," he writes of the popular touring pro, "is the greatest Mexican since Dolores Del Rio. And how he loves to talk. He makes Joan Rivers sound like Calvin Coolidge."

As a golfer for nearly 80 years, 81-year-old Bob Hope knows how to laugh at himself and how to laugh with others — President Eisenhower, President Ford, Bing Crosby, Jackie Gleason, Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Ben Hogan, even W. C. Fields, who was known to his Hollywood friends as Bill.

"I never played golf with Bill," he recalls, "but I heard many stories about the way he used to ham it up on the course.

"One day on the first tee, he whiffed his drive. He said, 'Saaay, one of my better shots' and headed down the fairway. About 200 yards out he instructed his caddie, Scorpy Doyle, to drop another ball.

"'Oh, here it is,' Fields said. 'Mighty fine drive.' Nobody seemed to mind. He was just being Bill Fields, and there was nobody else like him."

There is, of course, nobody else like Bob Hope now. Nobody who has played golf with so many people that duffers would love to have played with — all the famous golfers of the last half-century as well as Presidents, Kings, actors and astronauts. By carrying his driver as if it were a walking stick when he toured the Houston space center, he inspired the astronaut Alan Shepard to hit a 5-iron on the moon.

"I enjoy playing golf with astronauts," he writes. "They teach me to count backwards."

In addition to being the host at his Desert Classic each year, Bob Hope plays in several pro-ams on both the men's and women's tours. And for having promoted the game even better than he plays it, he's in the Golf Hall of Fame at Pinehurst, N.C.

"I couldn't believe it when they notified me," he writes. "It was almost like inducting John McEnroe into the Diplomatic Hall of Fame. I've done about as much for golf as Truman Capote has for sumo wrestling."

Not really. Now a 20-handicap golfer, he once was a 6, and he has 5 holes-in-one. He once competed in a major tournament — the 1951 British Amateur, losing in the first round to a Yorkshire paint salesman, 2 and 1.

"His name was Charlie Fox and he beat me smoking a pipe," he remembers, "which, of course, delighted Crosby."

Of all the celebrities in his golfing life, Bob Hope writes most fondly of Bing Crosby, his co-star in their seven "Road" motion pictures. In a way, this book is almost a script for another one of those films. Call it "The Road to the 19th Hole" where Bob Hope has told all these stories so often for so many years, espe-

cially the stories about his longtime pal, the crooner and actor he introduces as Harry Lillis Crosby.

"Bing was an excellent player, with the slowest backswing I've ever seen," he recalls. "While he was taking the club back, you could fit him for a tailored suit."

They met in 1932 in New York where, between vaudeville shows at the Capitol Theater, they would go to Alex Morrison's driving range under the 59th Street Bridge and hit golf balls. Several years later their vaudeville banter evolved into their first "Road" film. On location, they often found time for a round of golf at some of the 2,000 courses Bob Hope estimates he has played around the world. But mostly they played at Lakeside in Los Angeles or in Palm Springs.

"The oldest course in Palm Springs is O'Donnell, a little nine-hole layout," Bob Hope writes. "I played it twice one day and shot 66. I told Bing about it and Bing said, 'Tsk, tsk, Bob, I've told you before — you can't walk in after 15 holes. You've got to finish the round.' "

Bob Hope jokes about President Eisenhower's passion for golf, writing that "no Administration ever had more sun-tanned Secret Service men. You could always find Ike's farm at Gettysburg because it was the one completely surrounded by divots." And he remembers the day the President scolded him for shooting 74 as his opponent and winning $4 after having played poorly the day before as his partner.

"I'll never forget the sour look on Ike's face when he pulled out his money clip and paid off," Bob Hope recalls. "He looked me in the eye and grumbled, 'Why didn't you play this well yesterday?' He wasn't laughing either."

In the book's foreword, Gerald Ford jokes about what would be his "most prized memorabilia — the first dollar Bob Hope ever paid on a bet lost on a golf course." And elsewhere Bob Hope remembers having talked Ben Hogan out of four strokes after taking lessons at Tamarisk in Palm Springs from the four-time United States Open champion.

Bob Hope: In love with golf.

"Hogan did wonders for me," he writes. "I was tagging the tee shots 230 to 240 yards. We started playing $10 Nassaus, Ben from the back tees."

One day after Bob Hope had lost their match, Ben Hogan mentioned that Tamarisk, a par-72 course, was "a nice 68" because he could reach the greens of all the par-5 holes in two strokes.

"If you feel that way," Bob Hope told him, "give me another four shots."

Ben Hogan balked, but Bob Hope finally talked him into it. The next day Bob Hope shot 74 and broke even.

"I consider it," he writes, "an artistic triumph."

Another artistic triumph occurred after Bob Hope and Jimmy Demaret won $80 each from Bing Crosby and Byron Nelson in a San Antonio, Tex., charity match. In the confusion that day, no money changed hands. Several months later, Bing Crosby walked into the Lakeside pro shop. Not realizing that Bob Hope was there, Bing Crosby asked the pro to change a $100 bill for five $20 bills.

"I reached out from behind him," Bob Hope recalls, "grabbed three of those $20 bills and said, 'Dad, that's for San Antonio.' "

Crosbys Cut Ties Because of Dispute Over Control

By Sally Jenkins
Washington Post Staff Writer

Kathryn Crosby's decision to withdraw her late husband's name from the Bing Crosby National Pro-Am golf tournament was made in part because a proposal to bring in AT&T as a corporate sponsor meant the family would lose its storied control over the event, sources said yesterday.

According to one official close to the event, the Monterey Peninsula Golf Foundation's executive committee, which runs the tournament, and the PGA agreed last week to accept AT&T's estimated $1 million offer of sponsorship and rename the tournament the AT&T Bing Crosby National Pro-Am.

"It's a classic case of the family losing the grasp of the tournament," an official close to the event said.

Bing Crosby's widow decided Monday to cut all ties with the tournament started by her late husband in 1937 that brought together golfing greats and celebrities. She said "commercialization" of the event was the reason.

Yesterday, sources also said there was a feeling that the tournament, which raises about $1 million for charity, was not keeping up with the progress of the rest of the PGA Tour. There was reported dissatisfaction among CBS officials over decreasing sales for television air time and among PGA officials and golfers with the family's "iron-fisted" rule of the tournament.

"It's known in golf that many were unhappy with the tournament," a source said. "The wrong people were there . . . It was an act that was wearing thin on the network, the golfers, everybody. Corporate sponsorship was needed and everybody saw a chance to get something done."

Pro-am golf tournaments increasingly have turned to corporate sponsorship to maintain purse money, attract good fields and help underwrite television production costs.

Jim Harrington, vice president of program administration for CBS Sports, would not comment on whether sales were down except to say, "We would financially welcome the support of a major advertiser like AT&T. From a financial standpoint it would enhance the value of the tournament, but it's unfortunate it has to be done at the expense of the Crosbys' involvement."

AT&T approached the Monterey Peninsula Golf Foundation during the most recent Crosby tournament and expressed interest in sponsorship, said Harry Holmes, president of the foundation at the time.

Holmes, who resigned as president last week, denied charges reported yesterday that he had received a finder's fee from AT&T. A source close to Kathryn Crosby had said Monday that she believed a member of the committee had received between $50,000 and $150,000 from the company in a "behind the scenes" deal.

Several meetings were held in vain to convince the family to accept AT&T sponsorship.

Why Was Clambake So Special? Bing

BING CROSBY'S golfing clambake was like no other. It was more of a happening than a tournament.

Bing's cool charisma made it unique in so many ways. On the golf side, he convinced thousands of spectators that awful weather was merely what golf was all about. His name and fame enlisted a mix of entrants — entertainers, athletes, business zillionaires along with the top professionals. "Enlisted" is the wrong word; amateurs coveted an invitation at $1200 each, and no freebies.

He couldn't have succeeded without the three marvelous courses on the Monterey Peninsula — Pebble Beach, Cypress Point and Spyglass Hill. Many name pros, reluctant to be paired with inept amateurs in severe winter conditions, came anyway because of those courses. Also for the purse, naturally.

On the social side, Northern Californians of all strata reserved "Crosby week" as party time. Hotels and motels were booked solid. Bars and restaurants were jammed. A bartender once told me, "Off the end of my thumb, I'd guess January was our best business month of the year. Thank you, Bing."

I can't imagine the same atmosphere for the next sponsor. "The Crosby" was identity of itself. Can you hear a hostess saying, "Do come over during the AT&T" (or whichever corporate sponsor underwrites the $1 million tab)?

William Borland, chairman of the Monterey Peninsula Golf Foundation, announced yesterday the tournament will continue with the same format and a new sponsor, and proceeds will continue to benefit the Bing Crosby Youth Fund.

Crosby died in 1977. His widow, Kathryn, assumed control and appointed their son Nathaniel, then 17, tournament chairman. Their goal was to perpetuate what Bing stood for — a reasonably "pure" tournament only moderately infiltrated by commercial sponsors for TV while staving off Professional Golfers Association officials seeking more benefits and higher purses for the pros.

Kathryn made a firm (she said "irrevocable") decision this week, removing the family's name from the tournament because "wrong elements have seized control . . . and are determined to transform the Old Clambake into just another corporate sideshow for the PGA."

IN RECENT weeks, Kathryn has been prominent as spokeswoman for Continental S&L's aborted plan to offer women one-half percent more interest than men for IRAs. She asked Ben Langella, a Continental vice president, to announce the family withdrawal from the golf tournament.

Langella suggested she think it over, pointing out that the Crosby name was being perpetuated by the No. 1 tournament (in terms of TV ratings) in the world, and it remained her strongest personal link with the public.

"She's a proud, definite and wonderful person," Langella said. "Yesterday the decision was irrevocable, but I see a tiny opening - - as soon as the word was out, committees from other golf courses began calling. They want the Crosby with the same pro-amateur format. But my educated guess is that 'irrevocable' it is for the Monterey Peninsula."

The Chronicle heard yesterday from the Bermuda Run course in North Carolina. Bill Moloney, spokesman for the Chicago-based Alzheimer's Disease Foundation, said his group was prepared to back a Crosby tournament at Bermuda Run with "all of our resources, and to operate strictly according to Mrs. Crosby's wishes."

Although the sudden announcement brought much of the Crosby's problems to light, threats of cancellation have been heard for many years.

When Larry Crosby was tournament chairman for his brother Bing, he told this writer that the PGA's demands were "unthinkable -- they want to change the format, control and get a bigger slice of the TV, always increase the purses, supervise the selection of amateurs by keeping only scratch players, and on and on. They don't seem to understand that Bing and his friends are the stars of this show. They talk about the PGA giving to charity, but their demands would decrease the size of our Crosby Foundation."

ORIGINALLY, the official clambake party was emceed by Bing at the Monterey Peninsula club on the Sunday night after the tournament, and all the players showed up for the awards and a show. Then pros complained they were being delayed toward their next stop, and it became a pre-tournament event. After Bing's death, the clambake was taken over by his friend Phil Harris and other entertainers, but was mainly a gathering for the hundreds of volunteer officials.

OTHER SOURCES said the push for a title, "AT&T-Crosby National Pro-Am" at Monterey, has been in gear for 2½ years, and that at least one tournament official may have taken a finder's fee of $50,000 or more to sell it.

Nathaniel and Harry, have had diminishing interest in the tournament. After college, Nathaniel is pursuing his goal of becoming a professional. He did not qualify for the main tour and recently played in Japan without success. He is now in Florida on his way to a European mini-tour. Harry, who is awaiting marriage June 23, is a successful New York stockbroker.

Some knowledgeable onlookers believe a change was inevitable. At this February's Crosby, many writers noted the absence of prominent celebrities who, it was said, no longer felt they owed it to Bing. Nathaniel announced he would put his attention to the next invitation list.

THERE WAS also concern among business firms of Monterey and the operators of Pebble Beach properties. Bing had created dollar-sunshine for them at a time when weather would normally keep tourists away. The memory of his magic was fading, it was said.

In the end, the three golf courses will save the event for the Monterey Peninsula. No golf hole in the world is as well-known, or seldom played by the public, as the 16th at

A few years ago, Harris and Mrs. Crosby argued over her plan to eliminate the clambake as such and stage a formal ball on the Monday prior to the tournament, at $250 to $500 per plate, similar to Bob Hope's Classic Ball in Palm Springs.

Other internal problems arose. The Crosby sons,

Cypress, that 222-yard expanse whose "fairway" is the Pacific Ocean. Typically, any Crosby tournament -- including the withdrawal story which appeared on Page 1 of The Chronicle yesterday morning is decorated by a photo of that scenic 16th.

It symbolizes the winter wonder of the Crosby — or whatever they'll call it.

April 23, 1985

San Francisco Examiner

THE WASHINGTON POST

(48)

FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 1985

Crosbys Restore 'Bing's Clambake'

Kathryn Crosby, four days after announcing she was withdrawing the family name from the Bing Crosby National Pro-Am golf tournament, decided yesterday "to save Bing's tournament."

The widow of the late crooner/actor said through a family friend, "I have been besieged by requests from all over the world to make a final effort . . ." Among those wanting to keep the Crosby name associated with the annual PGA Tour event at Pebble Beach on California's Monterey Peninsula were the Crosbys' sons, **Nathaniel** and **Harry**.

Kathryn Crosby said Monday "the wrong elements have seized control . . . and they are determined to transform the old 'Clambake' into just another corporate sideshow for the PGA. In her new statement, she said, "Major corporations have generously offered far more assistance than AT&T (which had provoked her ire), with pledges to maintain the integrity of Bing's name and the event.

"Therefore, I have decided to continue the Crosby . . . with the sole condition that those who worked to undermine the integrity of the tournament step aside in favor of Bing's friends who have expressed their desire to continue in the grand old tradition of Bing's Clambake" . . .

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 1985

Pro-Am Group Stands Fast for AT&T Sponsorship

The foundation that runs the **Bing Crosby** National Pro-Am said yesterday it would stand by its "solid commitment" to AT&T despite **Kathryn Crosby**'s offer to reconsider cutting the family's ties to the golf tournament if it turned down AT&T sponsorship.

Kathryn Crosby said she was disappointed by the foundation's decision, saying the tournament could make more money for charity and golf purses by accepting pledges of support from other individuals and companies that didn't demand their names be attached to the tournament's title.

The late singer's wife announced Monday that, because of efforts by the PGA and the foundation to turn the tournament into what she called "another corporate sideshow," she was ending a tradition Crosby began in 1937 of pairing professional golfers with show business and other sports celebrites.

On Thursday, she said that after being "besieged by requests" to save the event, she would reconsider her decision if "those who worked to undermine the integrity of the tournament step aside in favor of Bing's friends" . . .

LETTERS

From Howard Levine, Florida

Thank you for the congratulations on my work on the KMH list. I still don't know where I got the strength to tackle it. I'm happy to have it done but I'm not sorry it's finished.

(Howard is discussing collecting in the old days and says:) I was very fortunate in having several advantages over most of the other collectors. To begin with, I was living in New York, which was then the headquarters for Decca records. If that weren't enough, I was a personal friend of the man who was then the founder and President of the company - Jack Kapp. My close friendship with him didn't hurt one bit, especially all the "special" records he was always giving me. And, on top of that, I came into the collecting picture "early-on" when you could still go to the record stores and buy a "blue" Decca for 35c a record!

From Ted Paradissis, North Balwyn

This is to let you know that member A.T.E (Tom) Walsh died peacefully at home on March 4th. Tom was a good freind of mine in the teaching profession, specializing in American History. He taught at Williamstown, St Albans and Strathmore High Schools, as well as at Whitefriars. On our recent film evenings, he thoroughly enjoyed 'Dixie' and 'The Bells of St Marys'.

From Sheldon O'Connell, Honolulu

The HAIL KMH series is most enjoyable. In my opinion, the work represents a large contribution to a continuing appreciation of Bing Crosby. Of particular interest to me are the earlier insights into the Music Hall, including a closer understanding of the important role played by Carroll Carroll in those years.

(OUR ARTICLE IN THE LAST ISSUE REGARDING THE DIFFICULTIES WE ENCOUNTERED PURCHASING SHELDON'S BOOK "BING - A VOICE FCR ALL SEASONS" BORE FRUIT. SEVERAL MEMBERS INCLUDING FRANC TARRAN AND KEVIN SHEATHER WROTE SAYING THAT THE PUBLISHERS FILLED THEIR ORDERS PROMPTLY, THEN A FEW DAYS LATER, WE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM BERNARD O'KEEFFE, MARKETING EXECUTIVE OF 'THE KERRYMAN:)

I am amazed that you found it so difficult to acquire a copy of the book. I must admit at first that we did habe some production problems with the title. However, once these were alleviated, each copy was posted direct. (You can order the book by sending a bank draft or I.M.O. for US$20.00 to: KERRYMAN PUBLICATIONS,

TRALEE, CO. KERRY, IRELAND. Of course, if you have a Visa card, simply quote your number and expiry date with your order, and everything else will be taken care of. BM)

From David C Rentz, Canberra

I present a 20's - 30's show on radio 2XX, here in Canberra. Last March I began my 7th year, and every Sunday, I still lead off with a vintage Bing.

From Charlie Chapman, Punchbowl

I cannot express fully the pleasure given to me through the tapes from the club's cassette library. Prior to joining, to have at my finger tips all of Bing's commercial recordings, not to mention his radio shows was to me at the time an impossible dream. I first became aware of Bing's voice at the opening of a cinema in Marrickville, a Sydney suburb, in late 1938. The first movie shown was "Sing you sinners" and from that time, I have been well and truly hooked on Bing.

From Frans van der Kolff, Amsterdam

The 'Hail KMH' article by Mr Taylor was most interesting. It's suppising how little was known (or written) about KMH. This new series is really filling Ohe gaps.

From Keith Parkinson, St Helens

New membership enquiries should be arriving within the next week or so. John Bassette has used the back of the March issue of BINGVILLE NEWS to plug the Society and Reg Bristo will also carry details in the March issue of BING. John Marshall is waiting until the July issue of CROSBY CHRONICLES before his promotion, so that should phase timings a little. The Leeds ICC meeting is timed for September and will receive a far amount of advance publicity because it is the 20th annual getogether. I'll book a stall to promote the VBCS.

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NEW CASSETTE FOR THE CLUB LIBRARY

At the suggestion of member Bob Schrader,we have put together a new tape of COLLECTORS ITEMS. This one features exclusively Bing's BLOW-UPS and PRIVATE recordings. Some of it is duplicated on CI 1 and 2, but the majority of it is NEW. When ordering, please ask for Collector's Items 3.

THE GREAT CROONERS

(continued)

Another of the early crooners was Byron G. Harlan, who began recording cylinder rolls in the 1890s and was one of the first singers to be heard on disc records. He was better known as a rural and blackface-comic singer, but I've always been more impressed by his ballads, which is why I list him as a crooner. *School Days* was one of the songs he made famous on records and I'm sure people will never stop singing such other Byron G. Harlan hits as *Farewell, My Nellie Darling, Sweet Kathleen, In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree* and *They Called Her Frivolous Sal.* I didn't really start to feel the spirit of Mr. Harlan until I started singing his songs as if I had no teeth, but once I did that, I was able to bring him to life within me. Because of that toothless, quavering sound on *School Days,* I'd pictured him as a frail old man, and when I finally saw a picture of him, I was really stunned. He was a little more than frail—about 250 pounds more. But he was Mr. Edison's favorite when he was recording for him and I can tell his records are really prized by collectors, because they're always so worn when I get them.

Mr. Edison was a little deaf in one ear, but in 1911, he heard enough of a singer named Irving Kaufman to know that he'd be a big star and signed him immediately. Kaufman was so good, in fact, that Victor signed him in 1915 and dropped Al Jolson, because they thought he'd never be as big as Kaufman. As it turned out, Mr. Kaufman's real success lasted to about 1925, but he kept working and joined the Avon Comedy Four on the radio in 1929. I had the pleasure of meeting him last year at his home in Southern California. He's 79 now, and when we sang some of his old songs together at the piano, he actually started to cry.

Mr. Kaufman's ballads were somewhat peppier than those from 1890 to 1910, but *Peg o' My Heart* and *It's Not the First Time You Left Me,* two of his most popular, really packed a great deal of feeling. Of course, from 1914 to 1918, composers and singers focused a lot of attention on America's role in World War One and Mr. Kaufman recorded what I consider one of the most interesting patriotic songs in 1915—a song directed at the immigrants who came here then to share in the blessings of our great country.

Last night as I lay sleeping
A wonderful dream came to me.
I saw Uncle Sammy weeping
For his children from over the sea.
They had come to him friendless and starving
When from the tyrant's oppression they fled;
But now they abused and reviled him
'Til at last in just anger he said:

If you don't like your Uncle Sammy,
Then go back to your home o'er the sea—
To the land from where you came,
Whatever be its name,
But don't be ungrateful to me.
For if you don't like the stars in Old Glory,
If you don't like the red, white and blue,
Then don't act like the cur in the story,
Don't bite the hand that's feeding you.

WORDS BY THOMAS HOIER. MUSIC BY JIMMIE MORGAN. © 1915 (RENEWED) LEO FEIST, INC., NEW YORK, N. Y. REPRINTED BY PERMISSION.

But no one expressed America's temperament during the Great War better than Arthur Fields—a boy singer on Coney Island for 15 years, and then, in 1914, a popular recording artist. He had

written the lyrics to *Aba Daba Honeymoon*, which was a big hit for Byron G. Harlan, but he sang Irving Berlin's *Along Came Ruth* for his disc debut on both Columbia and Victor. Berlin thought it was one of his best, but it bombed; however, Fields did manage to score for Mr. Berlin with *Stay Down Here Where You Belong*, in which Satan advises his son not to journey to earth, because the War was making it worse than Hell. Another Berlin-Fields triumph was *Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning*, easily one of the best songs to emerge from the War. Mr. Fields had enlisted in the New York National Guard and spent much of his time using his popularity to recruit men for military service. His street-corner concerts were so successful the Edison catalog claimed that "at least 600 boys are now somewhere in France fighting for democracy as a result of the work started by Mr. Fields."

It's a Long Way to Berlin, but We'll Get There and *We're All Going Calling on the Kaiser* really stirred the hearts of our fighting men, and Fields also added a lighter touch to Army life with such songs as *Would You Rather Be a Colonel with an Eagle on Your Shoulder (Or a Private with a Chicken on Your Knee)*? But one of my favorites is *I Don't Want to Get Well*, which he sang with the cackling trill that distinguished his voice:

I don't want to get well, I don't want to get well,
I'm in love with a beautiful nurse.
Early in the morning, every night and noon,
The cutest little girlie comes and feeds me with a spoon.
I don't want to get well, I don't want to get well;
I'm glad they shot me on the firing line—fine!
The doctor says that I'm in bad condition,
But oh, oh, oh, I've got so much ambition.
I don't want to get well, I don't want to get well,
'Cause I'm having a wonderful time.

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K-K-K-Katy, recorded in 1918, was another Arthur Fields classic, and when the War had been won, he produced two of his best and most famous—the catchy "nut" song *Ja-Da* and *How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm*. However, soon his career began to fade and he started performing on a number of independent labels under a wide variety of assumed names. In 1925, he honored the death of William Jennings Bryan with *Bryan Believed in Heaven (That's Why He's in Heaven Tonight)*; and, in the next year, the death of the silent screen's greatest lover prompted *Rudolph Valentino (The Great Director Has Called You)*. Unfortunately, very few people honored or even noticed the passing of Arthur Fields himself, who died several years ago at the age of 75 in a fire that swept through the old-people's home in Florida to which he'd retired.

Needless to say, it would be impossible to discuss each of the men who contributed to the spectacular history of popular music in America before 1930. I honestly don't know enough about some of them. Charles Harrison and William Robyn had really beautiful voices and on Mr. Harrison's Victor recordings, I actually think I can hear his heart beating. That's the kind of power and soul this man had. I'd really like to know more about him.

But a singer I do know something about is Billy Murray—probably the best comic singer of his time and one of Victor's hottest properties from about 1906 to the early Twenties. Though he often recorded with his friends—Burr, Harlan, Fields, Kaufman and dozens of others as well—he's best known for his duets with Ada Jones, most of which

were recorded between 1907 and 1922. However, even as a soloist, he had a long list of hits to his credit. His recorded version of *Harrigan* in 1915 was far more successful than George M. Cohan's rendition of the song on the stage, and *Indianola*, done in 1918, was surely one of the cleverest of the World War One tunes. Billy Murray then helped people laugh their way through Prohibition with *The Alcoholic Blues* and *How Ya Gonna Wet Your Whistle?*; but, like most of those giants of the past, his career was sadly drawing to a close by 1930.

Oddly enough, what closed the door on these singers were the greatest technological advances to hit the music business since Edison's phonograph. The invention of the electric microphone in 1925, the premiere of talking pictures in 1927 and the growth of radio through the late Twenties all combined to make these men as obsolete as the cylinder roll. These were singers who had acquired their skills on vaudeville stages across the nation, singers whose lungs and vocal cords were trained to project a musical tone so that it could be heard in the third balcony. Consequently, most of them found it very difficult to adapt their styles to the subtlety of the electric microphone and, therefore, to the new techniques of radio. In addition to this, *The Jazz Singer* with Al Jolson, the first mass-distribution talkie, had taken the country by storm and many vaudeville producers climbed onto the band wagon by substituting movies for the live acts they used to book into their theaters. Vaudeville was dying and taking its greatest stars with it; but radio was born, bringing new stars to replace them; and among these new talents were to be found the voices that started young couples spooning and American women swooning —the great crooners.

I would have to say that Gene Austin was the first of what most people remember as the true crooners. Accompanying himself on the piano, he sang softly in a high, pleasantly relaxing voice; and his recording of *Ramona*, which sold 2,000,000 copies, was the biggest hit of 1927. *My Blue Heaven*, done that same year, wasn't far behind in either popularity or sales. Nick Lucas, who introduced the six-string guitar to popular music and gave us *Tip-Toe Through the Tulips*, was another of the celebrated mid-Twenties crooners. From the way people took to this easy-listening, mild, soothing style after 1925, it was obvious that they were tired of dancing their feet off with the black bottom, the varsity drag and the charleston; they were ready to listen to good music sung by good singers, as they'd been in the days of Burr, Harrison and Robyn. The man most able to provide that quality was Hubert Prior Vallee, who, from the beginning of his career, cast a magnificent shadow over every other crooner in the business.

Mr. Valle began as a saxophonist in 1918 (there were only 100 saxophonists in the country at the time), having learned to play by copying Rudy Wiedoeft's technique on records. As a tribute to Wiedoeft, he adopted Rudy as his first name and began playing with a variety of bands before and during his student days at the University of Maine and later at Yale. His experience with The Yale Collegians, a Vincent Lopez touring band and a Ben Bernie ensemble prompted him to form his own eight-piece group in 1928, which played its first engagement at the exclusive Heigh-Ho Club in New York City. WABC began to broadcast his music from the club and Rudy Vallee was an immediate success.

By January 1929, Mr. Vallee and the Connecticut Yankees were playing the Palace Theater, as well as both the Brooklyn and the New York City Paramount theaters, and the response was truly stupendous. He had begun singing through a megaphone in the early Twenties and, needless to say, the women in his audience thought his high, birdlike voice was the

most romantic thing they'd ever heard. Just catching a glimpse of his lips through the megaphone had them fainting in the aisles.

However, while Mr. Vallee was playing the Brooklyn Paramount, Will Osborne—another famous crooner—was playing the Brooklyn Fox and claiming that Rudy Vallee had stolen his style. That rivalry almost ended in court, but Mr. Vallee later appeased Mr. Osborne by recording one of his songs. Whether or not Mr. Osborne was first with that style is very hard to say, but it's certain that he'd never have gotten much of a settlement from Rudy Vallee, who was reputed to be a devout tightwad. In fact, when he was alternating between the New York and Brooklyn Paramount theaters, he insisted that his musicians pack up their instruments after each show and ride the subway with him back and forth. That might not have been so bad but for the fact that they were doing ten shows a day.

Rudy Vallee may not have been much of a spendthrift, but he certainly deserved every penny he earned. RKO, hoping to capitalize on his romantic stature, sent him to Hollywood in 1929 to star in *The Vagabond Lover*, and his billing in the ads indicated the kind of reputation he was making for himself. "*Vagabond Lover*," the trailer announced, "Men hate him—women love him." And it was so true. When he came back to the Paramount in New York for a 21-month run, there were days when the lines were roped off from 42nd Street and Eighth Avenue, down 42nd to Seventh, across Seventh to 43rd and back to Eighth again; and most of those in line were ladies.

Then in October 1929, he was signed for the first one-hour radio variety show —*The Fleischmann Hour* for Fleischmann's Yeast—and I enjoyed ten years of Mr. Vallee's broadcasts before his popularity began to slip and the show went off the air. After that, he starred on the weekly *Sealtest Hour*; but times had really changed and with the long reign of swing music throughout the big-band era, Mr. Vallee started developing himself as a light-comedy actor after World War Two.

But as a crooner from 1928 to 1939, he compiled a phenomenal list of achievements. By 1930, his income had soared from $3000 to $4500 a week and he was one of the few performers to become a millionaire during the height of the Depression. Not only that but he used *The Fleischmann Hour* to showcase many new talents and actually gave such people as Edgar Bergen and Red Skelton their first real breaks.

Now forget Rudy Vallee the radio star, disregard his 20 movie roles, ignore the lines of screaming admirers. Let's talk about music again. This was the crooner who recorded hit after hit—*My Time Is Your Time, I'm Just a Vagabond Lover, A Little Kiss Each Morning, a Little Kiss Each Night, Let's Do It (Let's Fall in Love), Honey, Supposin', I'm Confessin', Deep Night, Miss You, Kitty from Kansas City, Betty Co-ed, The Maine Stein Song*, the *Whiffenpoof Song, Marie, Lover, Come Back to Me, Good Night Sweetheart* and I could go on forever, but I won't. Let me just say that this man's extraordinary fame was no publicity gimmick. Rudy Vallee had a voice that touched the souls of his audiences and mine as well.

(Concluded next issue)

And that's where we'll conclude this issue of 'The Crosby Voice'. I hope that you found plenty to read and enjoy on these pages.

BACK PAGE SPECIAL

"You'll like this, madam–
–an omnibus record of all Bing's songs."